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T H E  
L I F E  
O F  
M. T U R G O T,

COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE FINANCES OF  
FRANCE,

IN THE YEARS 1774, 1775, and 1776;

WRITTEN BY  
THE MARQUIS OF CONDORCET,  
OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES;

AND TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

WITH AN APPENDIX.

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*Seſta fuit ſervare modum, finemque tenere,  
Naturamque ſequi, patriæque impendere vitam;  
Non ſibi, ſed toti genitum ſe credere mundo.*

LUCAN.

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M.DCC.LXXXVII.



1609/2650

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T O

THE MOST NOBLE  
MARQUIS of *LANSDOWN*.

MY LORD,

I HOPE it will not be thought presuming, that I dedicate to your Lordship this translation of the Life of a minister, who has received a public testimony of your Lordship's esteem. If it contains some objectionable passages, I trust they will be atoned for, in the opinion both of your Lordship and the

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public,

iv D E D I C A T I O N.

public, by the useful tenor of the rest. Indeed it is difficult to suppose, that any honest and able man can peruse the following work without being made better by it.

An anxious search after political truth was attended, in M. Turgot, with an equal desire of propagating it. Though condemned as speculative during his administration, a short interval has shewn, that he has not only astonishingly accelerated in France the progress of political knowledge, but that he understood the actual circumstances and feelings of his country, far better than those who once presumed



# DEDICATION. v

sumed to censure him. His proposal for forming provincial assemblies, within eleven years after it had been originally rejected, has been recommended to the notice of the greatest assembly in his nation, by the order of its sovereign; and various other plans that he had framed, respecting the Corvées and other important objects, have been, in a greater or less degree, adopted by the ministers that succeeded him. In like manner, his ideas respecting public œconomy and pacific systems, as well as most of those respecting taxes, are rapidly gaining ground, notwithstanding the inde-

vi DEDICATION.

cent invectives that once pursued their author.

It is thus that great men know how to obtain weight, both in administration and out of it; that they effect good in person, and prepare it for the hands of others; and that, in spite of the inveterate and disingenuous opposition of those who are interested to prevent reforms, not only fame, but success, after a time, follows their endeavours.

For the public favours conferred upon myself, in common with the rest of the subjects of this empire, by the peace which your Lordship's  
decision

DEDICATION. vii

decision and manly views alone effected ; and for the many useful national measures which were projected by your Lordship, but which have been in part left for the execution of others, who have found it difficult to travel in any honourable path not pointed out by your Lordship ; I have the honour to subscribe myself,

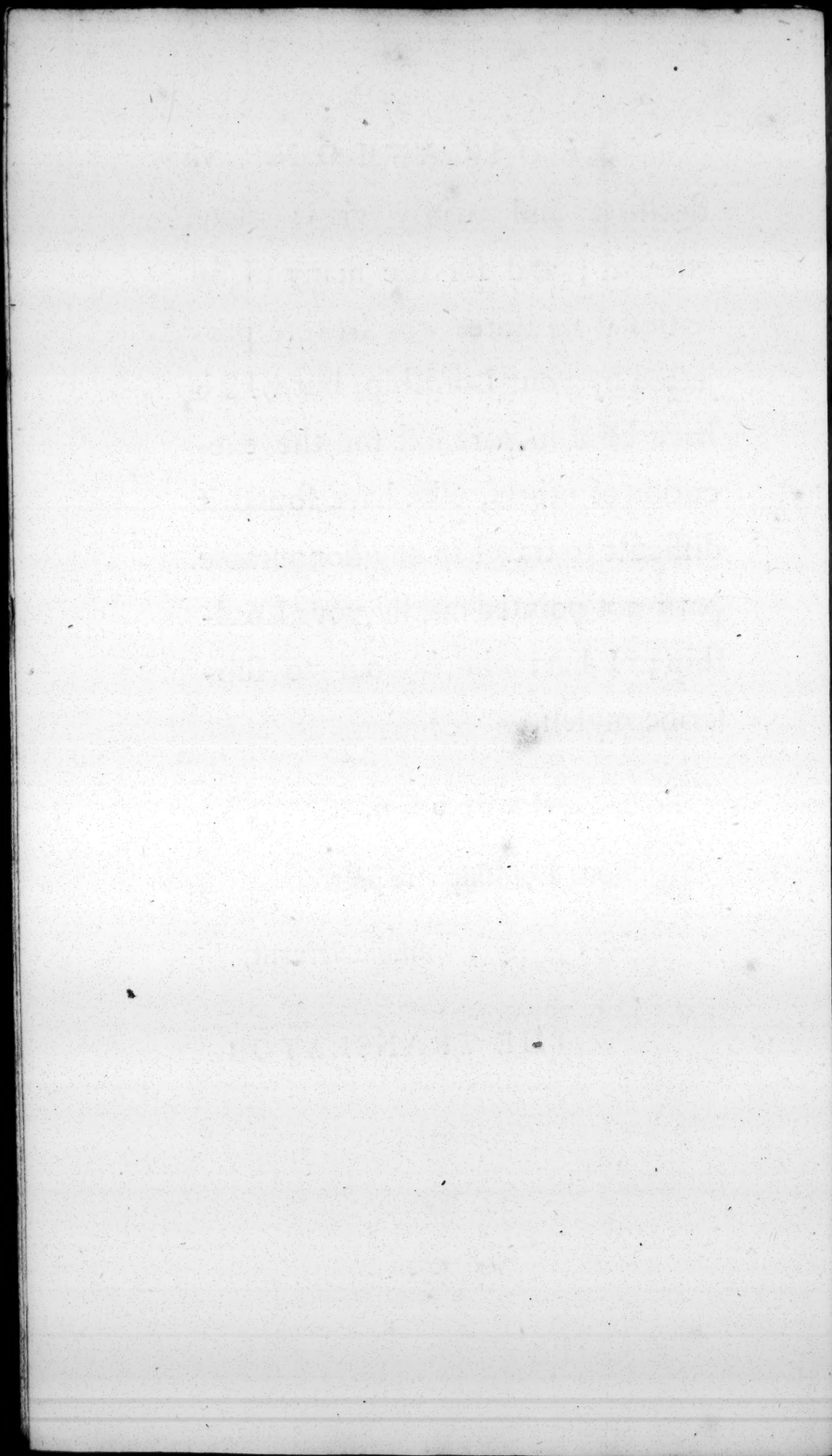
MY LORD,

Your Lordship's respectful

humble Servant,

THE TRANSLATOR.





# ADVERTISEMENT

PREFIXED TO

THE ORIGINAL WORK.

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THE Memoirs of the Life of M. Turgot, published in 1783\*, ought doubtless to have prevented the present undertaking. But however well these may be written, and notwithstanding the profound knowledge both of the principles of political œconomy, and of the measures executed or planned by M. Turgot, by which they are rendered at once so interesting and instructive; still I hope to be pardoned for having contemplated the same object under a different point of view, and for having endeavoured to make

\* See an account of these *Memoirs* in the last article of the Appendix. Note of the Translator.

M. Turgot

X ORIGINAL ADVERTISEMENT.

M. Turgot known to the world as a philosopher, rather than as a minister.—If I had consulted my own interest, I should have been silent : I felt all the disadvantage of coming after a work that had obtained so general and merited a success, and I could not be ignorant of the superiority which the author possessed over me. Yet I could not have pardoned myself, if I had neglected to render this feeble homage to the memory of a great man, which I tenderly cherish ; of whom the friendship was so pleasant and so useful to me, and whose remembrance will ever afford me one of those delicious but melancholy sentiments which come at last to make a part of our substance, and tend to endear to us our existence. To the dictates of this sentiment I have yielded ; and I presume to hope, that by procuring me some title to the indulgence of those who may cast their eyes upon this performance, it will obtain pardon for its defects.

P R E F A C E



P R E F A C E

T O T H E

TRANSLATION OF M. TURGOT'S LIFE.

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*THE translator of the following work is induced to lay it before the English public, from a persuasion of the importance of most of the principles contained in it, and that many of them may be found adapted to the present situation of Great Britain and Ireland, where the minds of men seem daily opening to political truth. At the same time, it is not meant to hold forth every thing contained in it, as an example of that political perfection, to which M. Turgot appears*

*pears to have thought mankind capable of attaining in matters of government.*

*It is impossible to see without concern, that a jealousy pervades it, of a celebrated person who succeeded M. Turgot in the administration of the French finances; and who has since submitted his principles to public examination, in a manner which does him the greatest honour. Every one must regret, that the author should suffer any thing of the kind to appear on this occasion, even though under the influence of some provocation. However the great authorities in question may differ upon some points, they agree upon others of a most capital nature, which deeply interest the welfare of mankind, and tend to advance political science in general. It is unfortunate therefore that such principles should be deprived of any part of that influence, which is likely to result from the concurring judgment of two such eminent persons, who, born in different countries, succeeding to the same administration by different paths, though rivals in public consideration,*

deration, unite essentially in many points. And, under such circumstances, it requires something more than the mere authority of prejudice or imposition, to check the discussion, and prevent the adoption of those material principles upon which they are agreed.

The freedom which M. Turgot appears to have entertained on the subject of religion, was certainly not among the reasons for translating the following work. As some little return, however, solid testimonies will be found in it, in favour of natural, and also of the principal doctrine of revealed religion.—At the same time we may take occasion to remark the folly of intolerance and bigotry. In England, where we have a liberal and comparatively tolerant religious establishment, there are happily multitudes of sincere Christians among all ranks and descriptions of people; while in France, the absurdity of the Roman Catholic form of the Christian religion, and the suppression of every other public form of it, has led aside a prodigious number of the most respectable persons  
of



*of that enlightened nation from the belief of any religion whatever.—Instances of this are to be found in various other countries : and the peculiar spread of popular doctrines under the French monarchy, proves that this maxim is in some degree applicable to politics, as well as to religion.*

*It being a justice due to M. Turgot, that his opinions on the subject of Foundations should not be misunderstood, the paper which he composed on this subject, is thrown into the Appendix.*

*If the present publication shall be favourably received, the translator may possibly present his country with the principal works of M. Turgot in an English dress ; an attempt which he hopes will be accompanied with more leisure, and consequently with more correctness, than the present translation can lay claim to.*

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T H E





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THE  
L I F E  
O F  
M. T U R G O T.

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C H A P T E R I.

**A**MONG the multitude of ministers, who, during a short period, govern the fate of nations, there are few who merit the attention of posterity. If they merely held principles and prejudices in common with the age in which they lived, of what moment is the name of one who has done what a thousand others in his place would have done as well?

General history serves to record the events in which they had a share. There we find that such a minister, raised from

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the crowd of the ambitious, was more eager to obtain his office than to deserve it; that he was more anxious to prolong his administration than to make it useful.

There we see the ill that such men do from ambition, the ill that they permit from ignorance or irresolution; sometimes the good that they have attempted without success, and more rarely the good that they have been able to effect. The history of their ideas, and even of their virtues, may be read in the opinions and prejudices of their contemporaries.

But if there appear among these a man, who has received from nature a superior strength of reason, accompanied with peculiar virtues and principles of action, and whose genius has so far outrun the acquisitions of his age as not to be understood by it; the life of such a minister may be interesting to all ages and all nations. His example may long be useful. His authority may give to important truths that sanction, which reason itself sometimes stands in need of. Such was the



minister whose life I have undertaken to write.

Though the honour of his friendship may be my only title to any share of public esteem, and though the sentiment of that friendship was the sweetest perhaps I ever felt, yet friendship shall not diminish my regard for truth. That sentiment which was the ruling principle of his life, the love of mankind, has alone prompted me to become his historian. If I could ever feel any temptation to alter any circumstance in his life, I should immediately call to mind the lesson which he has taught me, that the greatest benefit which can be conferred on mankind, is to publish truth without disguise or exaggeration, without passion, and without fear.

The life of M. Turgot will constitute but a part of this work. After relating the benefits he did, and the benefits he designed; after having described the virtues, the talents, and the courage, which he displayed in the few events of a life,



uniformly governed by those principles, not less simple than unalterable, which he had adopted; after speaking of some works that he wrote, dictated by superior understanding, exhibiting views comprehensive, well digested, and beneficial, but which are almost all of them beneath him; it will still remain for me to trace the history of his ideas, his opinions, and his character. I feel how much I am inferior to my subject; but, if I display it imperfectly, I shall at least be able to convince my readers how difficult it is to do it justice. The virtuous and the wise will here be able to learn what they have lost in this distinguished minister, and they will thank me for having endeavoured to make him more known to them.

Anne Robert James Turgot was born at Paris, on the 10th of May, 1727. His family was one of the most antient in Normandy. His name in the Scandinavian language signifies the God THOR.

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The hospital of *Condé sur Noireau* was founded in 1282 by one of his ancestors. His great great grandfather, a president of the noblesse of Normandy in the states of 1614, distinguished himself by the courage with which he opposed the grant, made to the count de Soissons, of the waste lands of the province, by a feeble government, more anxious to gratify the avidity of the great than to defend the rights of the citizens. M. Turgot's father was for a long time provost of the corporation of merchants. In this situation, the elegant sumptuousness of the entertainments he made, and the pure and excellent taste of the monuments he left behind him as a magistrate (a tribute which he paid, perhaps contrary to his better judgment, to prevailing prejudices) were the admiration of the vulgar. By the citizens, the regularity and œconomy of his administration, the disinterestedness and integrity of his conduct, were regarded with respect. A small number of en-

lightened men applauded the public labours, the result of comprehensive reason, in which he engaged, and the attention which he afforded to the health and ease of the poor, whom at that time it was too common to forget.

The day will long be remembered, when the astonished populace saw him, regardless of his personal safety, alone and unsupported, rush between two troops of French and Swiss guards, who were on the point of engaging each other, seize the arm of one of them that was already raised to strike, and compel the enraged soldiery to submit to a peaceable and unarmed authority.

An anecdote of the infancy of M. Turgot announces to us his character. The little allowance of money, which his parents made him when at school, repeatedly disappeared as soon as it had been received, without its being possible to guess the manner in which it had been employed. At last they discovered that  
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he distributed it to some poor day scholars to buy them books. Good-nature, and even generosity, are not uncommon among children; but to find these sentiments governed by good sense, and subservient to real and lasting utility, presaged a truly extraordinary man, all whose sentiments were soon to become so many virtues, because they were always to be controlled by reason.

M. Turgot was the youngest of three brothers. The eldest was intended for the rank of magistracy, which had been the station of his family for several generations; the second was destined to the profession of arms; and Robert was designed for the church. To pronounce in the cradle the future destiny of children, was at that time almost the general practice, guided by family considerations, or inferences drawn from the early inclinations of infancy. Men, placed thus at hazard, in situations for which Nature never intended them, gene-

rally became an useless, and often a fatal burthen to their families and to the state. The practice, happily, has no longer existence; and it is to philosophy, which we abuse so much by wrote, while we enjoy all the blessings that spring from it, that we owe the change.

The destination of M. Turgot was founded in probable circumstances. He had an extreme relish for study; his manners were full of simplicity and modesty; his character was pensive; and he had a sort of timidity, that was incompatible with dissipation. It was to be supposed, that it would have cost him few sacrifices to devote himself to the prospect of the brilliant fortune, which his birth and his talents could not fail to insure.

But M. Turgot had scarcely attained the age at which reflection commences, when he took at once the resolution to sacrifice these advantages to liberty and conscience, and to follow his ecclesiastical studies,

studies, but without declaring his repugnance to their proposed object till the period in which it would be necessary irrevocably to engage in it. The clerical profession demanded nothing from him, as to strictness of conduct, that could alarm him; but he felt the imprudence of any engagement for life. Whatever might be the object of an oath, he did not think that he could be permitted to trifle with the oath itself; or that he could, without disgracing himself, bring into discredit with the public the profession he had once embraced, by any line of conduct he might afterwards pursue. The profession of the church seemed to impose on him an engagement more peculiarly rash; that of having always the same public opinions; of preaching what he might quickly cease to believe, and of teaching, as truths to others, what he might himself conceive to be errors. It subjected him to the necessity, in case of any variation of sentiment from the church, either  
in



in every instant of his life to utter falsehoods, or to throw up the gown, and perhaps expose himself to every hazard. And who was there that could answer for having the courage to discharge this duty? Why expose himself to the calamity of being obliged to chuse between his conscience and his personal safety? If he were now a disciple of revelation, was he sure that he should always remain so? Could he be certain of always believing the same doctrines? If not, was it allowable to enter into a solemn engagement to profess them for life?

M. Turgot took his degree, and was elected prior of the Sorbonne, a rank usually conferred by the doctors of that house upon the bachelor who is of the most distinguished and honourable family. In consequence of this situation he was obliged to pronounce two Latin orations; and these compositions, drawn up, in 1750, by a young man of three and twenty years of age, are a singular monument,  
which

which marks not so particularly the extent of his knowledge, as a philosophy and comprehension peculiar to himself. In these works we find, if I may so express myself, the whole mind of the author; and it seems as if application and reflection had done nothing more after this than to give it expansion and firmness.

The object of the first oration is to show the benefits which the human species have derived from the Christian religion. The principal of these benefits are shewn to have been the preservation of the Latin language, and of some of the works of the antients; the introduction of scholastic learning, which at least preserved from absolute stupidity the savage destroyers of the Roman empire, and was the parent, in morals, in logic, and in metaphysics, of a subtlety and precision of ideas, the habits of which were unknown to the antients, and have contributed, more perhaps than we are aware of, to the progress of sound philosophy—A system  
of

of morality, founded on a general fraternity of all the individuals of the human species ; a system more universal, and better calculated to unite together men of all nations than the heathen morality, which tended rather to insulate them, and to unite together none but the members of the same city, and, above all, had in view to form patriots only, and philosophers instead of men—The abolition of slavery, domestic as well as feudal ; a work which is perhaps as much to be ascribed to the maxims of Christianity as to the policy of princes, who found themselves interested in calling into existence a body among the people which might help to reduce the power of the nobles.—M. Turgot closed this catalogue of benefits with the patience and submission that Christianity inspires, and which, quelling that restless and turbulent spirit that prevailed among the ancients, rendered Christian states less subject to convulsions, and taught them a respect for established authorities, and a reluctance



luctance to sacrifice the peace and the security of their brethren to the love of independence, however legitimate.

M. Turgot did not indeed pretend to be ignorant of the dreadful abuse of ecclesiastical power, which had transformed the human race into a vile herd, trembling under the rod of a legate or confessor; of the bloody contests which had taken place between the prelacy and the civil power; nor of the fatal maxims which had been disseminated by the clergy, arming in one place kings against their subjects, and in another rousing the people to a resistance of government, sharpening, according to their interests, at one time the poignard of the fanatic, and at another the axe of the executioner. The blood of millions of men, murdered in the name of the Divinity, still smokes around us. The earth every where covers the mangled victims of barbarous intolerance. Was it possible for a mind of gentleness and sensibility not to revolt  
at

at these horrible ideas? Was it possible for a virtuous and noble mind to view, without indignation, in the same ages, the human understanding degraded by the most ignominious superstitions, morality corrupted, the duties of man misrepresented or violated, and the art of imposition and of degrading the human species resorted to as the only means of guiding and governing it? All those enormities, which have been disguised under the appearance of sacred duties to the eyes of the ignorant, were originally suggested to statesmen as crimes necessary to the repose of nations, or the ambition of sovereigns.

M. Turgot was too enlightened to expect that any thing but abuses could arise from any scheme of religion, that, loaded with speculative dogmas, makes the salvation of men depend upon their creed, treats the free exercise of reason as a culpable boldness, and erects its priests into the preceptors of the people, and the umpires of morality. He could not be  
ignorant,

ignorant, that if the governments of Europe could cease to be enlightened, or forget for any time to watch the enterprizes of the clergy, and if all men of education and information, and such as have pretensions to place, in a word, all those whose opinion really governed the world, could ever cease to be united in a spirit of toleration and enquiry, the same causes would quickly produce the same effects. But the return of these circumstances M. Turgot regarded as impossible. He saw that the calamitous trials which the human species had undergone, had conducted them to an epoch, at which the revival of barbarism was no longer to be apprehended; that the daily decrease of the spirit of superstition and intolerance, together with its fatal influences, was a necessary consequence of the unremitting progress of the human understanding; and that general contempt would complete, in less than a century, the work that reason had so happily begun. These blessings,



bleffings, of which the prospect descends to our children, and of which we ourselves have tasted some of the fruits, have indeed cost our ancestors dear : but has not Asia suffered almost as much from the ferocity of her conquerors, as Europe from the cruelty of her priests ? The calamities of Asia were unaccompanied with any alleviating circumstance : one revolution and one tyranny succeeded to another, and but for the improvements of Europe, the human species had been condemned to perpetual disasters and everlasting ignorance.

The subject of M. Turgot's second oration is a history of the progress of the human understanding, which he deduces from the most antient nations of Asia (who, with respect to us, were the inventors of the sciences) through all the revolutions of empires and opinions down to the present time. He shows how the perfection of the fine arts is limited by Nature herself, while that of the sciences  
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is infinite. He explains how it happens that the most useful inventions in the mechanic arts, may date their origin from periods of ignorance ; these inventions having for their object pursuits which are at all times indispensable, and in these cases, observation and experience giving to men of genius the knowledge that capacitates them for inventions. He ascribes the first progress made in the sciences to the discovery of writing ; a further progress to the invention of an alphabet, and a much further progress still to the art of printing, which rendered them extensive and durable. In the last place, he proves, from the unbounded perfectibility which he attributes to the human understanding, that no limits can be prescribed to the improvement of the sciences. This opinion, which he never once abandoned, was one of the great principles of his philosophy.

## CHAPTER II.

**T**HE time when it was necessary to declare that he would not become an ecclesiastic, was arrived. He announced this resolution to his father, with his motives, by letter ; and he obtained his consent.

The post of master of the requests was that which he had chosen. Eager in his pursuit of every kind of knowledge, he had not only applied himself to poetry and the belles lettres, but he had studied the elements of every science, had made himself master of many, and had drawn out a list of a great number of works that he had planned. In this extraordinary catalogue, I find poems, tragedies, and philosophical romances ; but especially extensive treatises upon natural philosophy, history, geography, politics, ethics, metaphysics, and grammar.

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The plans of some of these works are all of them that now remain ; and these plans discover information the most various and comprehensive, and views the most novel and profound. This passion for study, might have conducted a man of a character equally remote from ambition and a mind equally superior to vanity, but with an inferior genius, to desire no other profession than that of a man of letters. M. Turgot thought otherwise. The employment that promised him the greatest sphere of utility, without obliging him to make any sacrifices either to falsehood or injustice, was that which he thought it his duty to embrace. He therefore chose that of the law, and, among its several departments, fixed upon the office of master of requests. A master of requests in France is the servant of the executive power, where the activity of that power embraces every thing ; he is the instrument of government in operations of commerce and finance, in which, of all others,

the public prosperity is most interested ; and he is called, more frequently than the member of any other order, to take upon himself the first offices of administration. A master of requests is rarely without a considerable portion of influence respecting some one of the provinces, or the whole state ; so that it seldom happens that his liberality or his prejudices, his virtues or his vices, do not, in the course of his life, produce great good or great mischief.

M. Turgot had prepared himself for this new career, by particular application to those parts of science, which are most connected with its functions and its duties ; namely, the study of natural philosophy, so far as it relates to agriculture and manufactures, to the subjects of merchandise, and the execution of public works ; together with those parts of mathematical knowledge which lead to practical applications of natural philosophy, and to facilitate the calculations that are frequently

quently necessary in politics, commerce, and philosophy. But he had made himself a complete master of the principles of legislation, politics, executive government, and commerce. Many of his letters, written at this period, strikingly illustrate his acquaintance with these subjects, and, if we compare them with the performances that were then extant, shew that he owed the chief of his knowledge to himself.

Two events at this period of his life deserve to be selected from the rest.—He was commissioned to examine the cause of a person employed in the office of the farmers general, who had been prosecuted in the courts of law, but which he had found the means to elude. M. Turgot, conceiving the man guilty, and feeling the necessity of rigour in this case, put off the investigation from time to time. At length, after long delays, he took it under cognizance, and found the defendant innocent.



nocent. Immediately he felt himself obliged to repair the injury which might have arisen from the delay. He enquired into the amount of the appointments, of which the party had been deprived during the pendency of the cause, and paid the exact sum, taking care to make it appear an act, not of generosity, but of justice.

Forced to adjudge causes, where the letter of the law seemed contrary to natural justice, he took the latter, which he felt to be superior to all municipal laws, for his guide. He drew up a report in a particular cause upon these principles: Not one of the conclusions of his report was admitted. The majority decided, that a positive law, where the sense of it was clear, ought to be preferred before that more sacred law, whose principles are, by men of little reflection, considered as vague, and its decisions as uncertain. A few days after, the parties compromised the cause in the manner in which M. Tur-

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got would have decided it, and did homage to that justice which is of a superior order.

While M. Turgot filled the office of master of requests, a *chambre royale* was held, and he sat at it. Had he believed that his conscience required him to refuse this, he certainly would have refused it. He could not indeed be ignorant that such a step demanded no great degree of fortitude. The affair in agitation concerned not any real troubles in the state, but the petty cabals which divided the court, and that quarrel respecting the billets of confession, the importance of which was to be momentary, and the ridicule eternal. M. Turgot knew that the party which was then oppressed might, under another administration, become the superior. If he trod in the beaten path, he could scarcely be noticed; but by deviating from it, he insured himself the support of a party, and the ap-

plause of the people. The circumstance was one of those, more frequent in their occurrence than we are apt to imagine, in which the most daring is yet the safest part, and in which a man best promotes his interest by appearing to sacrifice it to his duty. But he was as much a stranger to this refined ambition as to a servile complaisance.—He acted with the court, just as he would have opposed it, because he felt that in so doing he did right.

M. Turgot thought that the king owed it to his subjects to institute courts of justice, composed of members, in such numbers and possessing such qualities as the laws required, who should be commissioned, not for the trial of a particular cause, but for a particular district, or else for a particular class of causes; and whose proceedings in their functions should be incapable of being arbitrarily set aside. He believed that every tribunal, thus constituted, might be held a legitimate tribunal; and that the difficulty attending  
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the replacing the antient judges when they chose to quit their functions (not because they were expected to decide contrary to law, but because an attack was made upon their personal opinions, or upon immunities foreign to the great object of their appointment) could only give strength to anarchy, and introduce a sort of trial of skill between the ministers of the sovereign and the officers of justice, who should sacrifice with the most obstinacy the nation's interest to their own. The popular opinion, indeed, was decidedly adverse to the *chambre royale*; but this was of little consequence to M. Turgot. The certainty of having acted right, and the approbation of a few superior characters, were all he desired. He always thought, that the public prejudices ought not to be shocked in matters of indifference, yet, that when those prejudices were both unjust and mischievous, it was his duty to set them at open defiance.

It

It was nearly at the same period of his life that M. Turgot wrote some articles in the *Encyclopédie*. He was intimate with the editors of that work. But what had more weight with him was, that he was persuaded that the only true and efficacious method of procuring permanent happiness to mankind, was to abolish their prejudices; and to teach them those truths that ought to govern their sentiments and their conduct. He believed, that it would lead infallibly to this end, to examine all questions and tranquilly discuss all opinions. But it was of importance that this discussion should be public; that the whole race should be invited to assist in the examination; and that the knowledge of truth should no longer be shut up within a narrow circle, but become sufficiently diffused to reach all those persons who, by the education they receive, are destined to occupy public stations.

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To a man who thought in this manner the *Encyclopédie* was an interesting work. It was intended to comprise sketches, at once accurate and elementary, of the subjects of human knowledge; and to exhibit the most certain, the most useful and important truths in the different branches of science. It was besides to contain a discussion of every question that interests the learned or the humane; opinions of the greatest universality or celebrity, with the origin and progress of those opinions, and the arguments whether just or fallacious, on which they had been supported. With this idea, M. Turgot was very desirous that this work should be perfect; and perceiving with regret the sort of neglect to which several important heads of the work were consigned, he contributed his assistance to it. The articles he furnished were those of *Etymology*, *Existence*, *Expansibility*, *Fair* and *Foundation*.

Under the first of these heads, he shews  
that



that the science of *Etymology*, which has been abused till it has become almost ridiculous, may, under the guidance of sound criticism, cease to be arbitrary or uncertain; that it may then elucidate the revolutions of language, and consequently the history of opinions and of intellectual improvements; and erudition thus appear no longer a frivolous study, even in the eye of the philosopher, who has no relish but for truth, and for truths of real use.

In the article of *Existence*, he analyzes the manner in which we are led to form the idea, and the exact meaning which we affix to the word; and he finds that existence as to us, is an idea of the permanence of certain collections of sensations, which in similar circumstances are constantly revived, either under their original form, or with variations resulting from general laws. Thus when we say that an object exists, we mean only that a certain collection of simultaneous sensations,

tions, having been perceived by us during a certain time, having repeatedly disappeared and again presented themselves to us, we are induced to conceive, even when the collection is no longer present to our mind, that it would infallibly be present if we were again placed in the same situation: and it is then we say an object exists.

This theory, which was so new that it was hardly understood by some philosophers, had important consequences. It was connected with the whole theory of the nature of our knowledge, and the degree of evidence to which it is in our power to attain. It constitutes indeed the greatest and almost the only improvement in the science of the human mind since the days of Locke.

In the same article M. Turgot shewed the possibility of our acquiring ideas of space, and the disposition of bodies in it by the employment of the organ of sight only. This idea, not less true than un-  
common

common, tended to rectify and compleat the researches of Locke and his disciples.

His article of *Expansibility* opened new views in natural philosophy. He explained in what consisted the property which fluids have of occupying an indefinite space by virtue of a force that is always decreasing and which ceases to act the moment an opposite force comes into equilibrium with it. He taught how to distinguish the evaporation of fluids (that is, the dissolution of their particles in the air) from their evaporation, or change from the form of a liquid to that of an expansible fluid. He observed, that when the degree of heat is the same, vaporisation takes place more speedily and in greater masses, in proportion as the liquids acted upon are restrained by a less or a greater force ; so that it does not stop, for example, in a close vessel from which the air has been previously removed, till the expansive force



of the particles already vaporised, is in equilibrium with the force that causes the vaporisation. From these principles was deduced the practicability of distilling liquors *in vacuo* with an inferior degree of heat: and this discovery might be employed, either for the introduction of œconomy in distillery as a professional art, or for the execution of chemical analyses with greater precision, so as successfully to discover the immediate principles of a great number of substances. M. Turgot did not employ himself till long after in the pursuit of these consequences of his theory, but still he was the first who employed the distillation *in vacuo* in the way of analyses, as also the first who proposed to apply the discovery to the distillation of sea-water and of brandy.

In the article *Fair*, M. Turgot enquires into the origin of the institution. In those ages, in which ignorance, plunder, and continual wars, together with the distrust and hatred of different nations

to

to each other, confined commerce to narrow bounds, it was only by the intervention of Fairs that the kingdoms of Europe, the provinces of an empire, the different districts of a province, and even the villages of the same district, could exchange their productions and relieve their mutual wants, under shelter of the momentary protection, which, from private considerations, was extended to the places in which the Fairs were held.

But this institution has now ceased to be useful to commerce. The regulations which prescribe either a determinate place or time for commerce, those even which such institutions render necessary, and above all those for which they serve as a pretext, are so many incroachments upon liberty, and consequently so many taxes upon industry, and violations of justice. Their consequences would be detrimental even if they did nothing more than force the stream of commerce out of its natural channel. The common interest

rest of the vender and the purchaser will be more quick-sighted to fix upon the place, the time and the manner, in which they should meet to carry on their traffic, than the most skilful merchant, or the most enlightened legislator in the world.

In the article *Foundation*, M. Turgot shews that as it is extremely difficult even for the living to fix upon institutions, the plan of which shall accord with the interest of the whole and the general system of administration ; so it is impossible that a perpetual foundation should not become in process of time eternally useless, if it be not eternally mischievous. The inevitable revolutions that take place in the manners, the opinions, the science, the industry and the wants of mankind ; the changes, not less certain, in the extent, the population, the capitals, and the manufactures of a town, or a province, would render it absolutely impossible for the most enlightened man of the present



age to form an institution that should be salutary to the next. How much then must these abuses, which men of the soundest judgment and greatest genius cannot foresee or prevent, abound in those institutions which are almost always the effect of vanity, of uninstructed benevolence, of caprice, of the narrowest prejudices and the most mistaken views?

After having proved the danger of perpetual foundations, M. Turgot shews that they ought to be respected no longer than they are useful, and that government derives an inherent right even from the nature of things to amend them. The property we possess in land, or necessities, is a right founded in nature, the preservation of which right was the principal motive to the formation of societies. The property, on the other hand, of foundations, and other establishments of the sort, exists only from the consent of government; and the right of watching over their progress, and of repressing them  
when

when they become either detrimental or useless, is implied in this consent. The idea of an *establishment* necessarily implies a *power* that can change it : so that the whole nation is the true proprietor of the wealth belonging to these institutions, it having been given under its authority, and for its use. M. Turgot made no particular application of these principles. He knew that this would be unnecessary with men of sound sense ; and he believed that there were cases in which the application of principles ought to be left to the public. He contented himself in this article, with establishing in a few words the true principles according to which the point, as to this important object, ought to be fixed, at which the rights of nature end, and those of legislative authority begin ; and at the same time with pointing out the rules which ought to govern the exercise of those rights.

These five articles, which are each in a

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different

different style, and each of which exhibits views not less novel than important, were the only articles in the *Encyclopédie* written by M. Turgot. He had however prepared several others, and as the article of a dictionary, however important it may be, requires neither an extensive plan, nor a regular ascent to first principles, nor a profound examination of the parts of its subjects, nor a detail of the particulars of which it is composed; that spirit of order and combination, that love of perfection, which prevented M. Turgot from finishing any extensive work, could only have served to improve these detached compositions, though in any event they could appear to be incomplete and merely elementary to no one but himself.

But the persecution set on foot against the *Encyclopédie*, hindered M. Turgot from continuing to write in it. No one will suspect him of having deserted the cause of reason and knowledge through ambition



ambition or timidity : for never did man profess with more openness and uniformity his contempt for prejudices, and his horror of the obstacles that are opposed to the progress of truth. He was animated by a different motive. The *Encyclopédie* had been successfully represented as the work of a sect, and he thought that it would in some degree prejudice the truths which he wished to propagate, to insert them in a work branded, whether justly or unjustly, with such an imputation.

He thought every species of sect pernicious, whether it were the ambition of domineering over the minds of men that formed it, or, as in the present case, (where the appellation of the *secte Encyclopédique* was given) it owed its origin to a persecution which obliges men to make a common cause ; still from the moment a party exists, all the individuals that compose it are made answerable for the faults and errors of the rest ; the necessity that

calls for their union, obliges them to conceal or to qualify principles which may be offensive to such, as by their weight or their countenance are useful to the party. They are obliged in a manner to form a system of doctrines, and the opinions which belong to this system, being adopted without examination, in the end become mere prejudices. Friendships entertained for any of their body, stop at the individual, but the hatred and envy that any one of them excites, are extended to the whole—If the sect is composed of the most enlightened men in a nation, if the defence of truths, the most important to public happiness, be the object of their zeal, the misfortune is so much the greater. Every thing which they procure, that is just and useful, is rejected without examination. Abuses, errors of every kind, find for advocates that crowd of disdainful and puny men, who are the sworn enemies of all that is striking and admired. Is truth publish-

ed to the world? It is immediately branded by those whom it might injure, with the name of party, which is in itself odious, and is thus to a certainty deprived even of attention. M. Turgot was therefore convinced, that a more fatal blow could not be aimed at truth, than to compel those who love her to form a party; and that no fault could be more mischievous, than, either from vanity, or cowardice, to give into this snare.

Among the earliest friends of M. Turgot, we are to reckon M. de Gournai, who had long been a merchant, and who became afterwards an intendant of commerce. The experience and the reflections of M. de Gournai, had shown him the truth of principles at that time little known in the administration of commerce. He had learned, or rather he had seen, that the laws prohibiting the importation of foreign commodities, and the exportation of domestic raw materials,



though having for their pretext the encouragement of national industry, in effect deranged its natural course ; that the protection afforded any particular species of commerce, is prejudicial to commerce in general ; that privileged monopolies, whether for buying, for selling, or for manufacturing, far from giving vigour to industry, stifle it in all but the privileged persons, and in them convert it into a spirit of intrigue. He went farther. He found that the regulations which are, or are pretended to be formed, to prevent a scarcity of necessaries, to fix them at a moderate price, insure their goodness, or the excellence of manufactures ; at once diminish and render uncertain their quantity, enhance their price, and almost always reduce their quality. In short, that all these precautions of timidity and ignorance, all these laws, springing from that spirit of Machiavelism, which has communicated itself from the enterprizes of politicians to the legislation of com-

merce, are productive of inconvenience, vexation, and expence, which would render them mischievous ; though they should accomplish all the particular good intended by them, instead of producing the opposite effects.

M. Turgot derived great advantages from his conferences with M. de Gournai. He adopted all the truths which this upright and enlightened citizen had reaped from long experience. Already convinced, that entire and unlimited freedom was the only useful, and also the only just political principle of commerce, M. de Gournai brought him acquainted in the detail with all the advantages of this freedom, and all the inconveniences of prohibitions. He taught him how to refute those objections which have their source in the ignorance of statesmen, the prejudices of merchants, or still oftener in the personal interest of those who are at the head of the mercantile profession. The grounds of the attachment of the last to political regulations are, that they  
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bring the new or important operations of commerce into a dependence on government, and consequently free them from the competition of those merchants, whose capital is too slender to buy them protectors.

M. de Gournai died in 1759; and M. Turgot interesting himself for the memory of his friend, which he thought intimately connected with the public welfare, published his eulogium. In this paper he explained with accuracy and precision the principles of M. de Gournai, which he had made his own. Though he regarded this composition merely as a sketch, it includes the simplest and the fullest compendium of those principles, which prove the utility of freedom, in what respects industry and commerce, and the injustice of all restrictions; and exhibits at the same time a model for panegyrics on the dead, the first object of which should be the instruction of the living.

## CHAPTER



## C H A P T E R III.

**M.** T U R G O T was destined for the office of an intendant. But with whatever assiduity he had appropriated to himself all those parts of science, of which he could perceive even the shadow of a distant utility, he felt that he had not been able to acquire experience; and he was not willing to attain this last perfection at the expence of the province which might be entrusted to his care. He therefore prevailed on M. de la Michodiere, with whose integrity and public spirit he was well acquainted, to let him bear him company, and assist him in the progresses which he made throughout his province; that under his eyes he might acquire that experience which he stood in need of, which theory cannot supply, but of which it facilitates the acquisition, and  
which

which theory alone can render certain and truly useful.

In 1761, M. Turgot was appointed intendant of Limoges.

The immediate authority of an intendant lies within narrow bounds. Directions in detail for carrying into execution the general orders of administration, the power of making provisional decisions in certain cases, and of adjudging others which respect commerce and finance subject to an appeal to the council : such are nearly all the functions of his office. But he is the officer of government, and he possesses its confidence. Government sees but with his eyes, and acts but by his hands. It is upon the information he collects, upon the memorials he dispatches, and upon the accounts he renders in, that ministers decide upon every thing, and that in a country where every political power centers in administration, and where a legislation, imperfect in all its parts, compels it to uninter-

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mitted activity, and to reflection upon every subject. Perhaps it were to be desired, that the public authority of these magistrates should be greater, and their secret influence less, since they might then be personally responsible for their crimes, and even for their faults. Instead of which, under the present constitution, being always covered by the supreme authority, any voice lifted up against them seems to attack government itself; and government is often put to great difficulties lest, in supporting an intendant, they should exercise a despotic tyranny, or, in condemning him, they should introduce a dangerous anarchy.

When M. Turgot was appointed intendant of Limoges, M. de Voltaire wrote to him in these words: *I have lately been told by one of your brethren, that an intendant is of no use but to do mischief; I trust you will prove that it is in his power to do much good.*

The general disposition of the public  
was



was at this time favourable to these views of benevolence. The religious and military rage, which had tormented Europe for fourteen hundred years, began to subside towards the close of the last century; and an emulation as to commerce and riches, and for excelling in arts and literary reputation, discovered itself in all nations. The people were more quiet; but as some account began now to be made of them, and their voice was sometimes listened to, it was seen that they were still much too miserable. The time was not yet arrived, when their happiness could be founded on the invariable maxims of a wise and enlightened policy: but in the mean time the encouragement of agriculture, and a humane attention to the poor, were become the principal object of those statesmen who possessed any virtue or any desire of fame.

M. Turgot profited of these dispositions, to give activity to the society of  
agriculture

agriculture established at Limoges, to direct their efforts to important objects ; to open a mode of instruction by public lectures to the female professors of midwifery, who were scattered about the country ; to procure for the people the attendance of able physicians in epidemic diseases ; and to establish houses of industry, supported by charity, the only species of alms-giving which does not encourage idleness, and which affords at once relief to the poor, and advantage to the public. He introduced at the same time into his generality, the cultivation of potatoes, a very valuable resource for the poor. The people at first regarded this food with disdain, and as beneath the dignity of the human species ; and they were not reconciled to it till the intendant had caused it to be served at his own table, and to the first class of citizens, and had given it vogue amongst the fashionable and rich.

But

But while M. Turgot proceeded with so much activity and zeal, and on principles the most certain, in promoting that good which other intendants might have equally produced, he meditated projects more noble and more worthy of his intrepidity and his knowledge. The principal objects of his attention, during the thirteen years that Limousin was entrusted to his administration, were the distribution of the taxes, the construction of roads, the regulation of the militia, the preventing a scarcity of provisions, and the protection of commerce.

In all those generalities which are subject to the *Taille*\*, one of the first ideas

\* “ The land-tax (or *taille*) in some of the counties of France, is laid only on the landed property liable to that tax, and the proportion is determined by a terrier ; but in the greatest part of the kingdom, the land-tax has regard to the *condition of persons* ; and then the assessment is made according  
“ to



ideas that presents itself to an administrator, who aims at establishing impartial justice, is that of a register. But the means of forming it accurately and equitably have scarcely been discovered, even at the present day. The register already established in Limousin by M. de Tourni, had produced disorders as confi-

“ to a conjectural proportion either of the fortunes  
 “ of the yeomen, or of the produce of the lands  
 “ which they hold under lease; and the nobles who  
 “ keep their lands in their own hands have only a  
 “ right to some limited exemptions.—The total  
 “ of the land-tax, which impost in some counties  
 “ has a different denomination, amounts to about  
 “ 95,000,000 of livres, including the poundage of  
 “ the collectors, wherever that poundage is added to  
 “ the capital sum demanded. The land-tax which  
 “ is paid by some towns that have compounded for  
 “ it, by the produce of some duty on merchandize on  
 “ its entrance into them, is not included in the above  
 “ sum. It is proper to deduct from the above  
 “ amount the diverse diminutions granted on this  
 “ tax throughout the kingdom, and which amount  
 “ yearly on an average to near 4,000,000 of livres.”

See the English translation of *M. Necker, on the Administration of the Finances of France*.—Note of the Translator.

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derable as those which had led to the undertaking.

The greater part of the lands in this province are cultivated by farmers, who are supplied by the land-holders with an habitation, with subsistence for a part of the year, seed, implements of husbandry, and the necessary stock of cattle. When the harvest is ended, the proprietor takes half of it.—It was not only very difficult to distinguish in this mode of cultivation, how much was to be considered as the net produce of the land, and how much was to be deducted for the expences of cultivation, or the interest of the capital advanced in live and dead stock ; but it was not known in the time of M. de Tourni, that the part alone of which the proprietor could dispose, without detriment to the cultivation, and which was alone to be regarded as forming the annual produce, was also the only part which could be the subject of taxation, and to which the tax should be proportioned.

The value of the lands had thus been  
inferred



inferred from no certain principle; and the labours of M. Turgot for the reparation of these disorders, and for delivering agriculture from the unequal distribution of a tax, of which a part fell directly upon the beasts employed in it, furnished the first example of a register constructed upon sound principles, and which was methodical, and conformable to justice. — To this benefit M. Turgot added another. The collection of the tax was in his time the business of each community; and of consequence was equally burthensome both to the individual who was forced to undertake it, and to the community who were made responsible for the incapacity or dishonesty of their collector. Mr. Turgot formed a new office, which the community trusted to some man of responsible circumstances and tried character, and who voluntarily undertook it at a very moderate poundage.



The desire of relieving Limoufin from the burthen of the *Corvées* \*, lay still nearer to the heart of M. Turgot. The poor, who have only their wages to subsist upon, condemned to work without wages ; families, dependent upon the labour of a single person, devoted to hunger and wretchedness ; animals necessary to husbandry taken from their work, without regard either to the occasions of their owners, or even of the country at large ; in short, orders absolute in their form and cruel in their nature, severe punishments rigorously executed, which brought on desolation and misery and joined humiliation to misfortune : such is the picture of the *Corvées*. If we add to this, that the roads were made reluctantly and by persons totally destitute

\* The word *Corvée* appears derived from *cura viæ* ; that is, *care of the roads*. It signifies the call made upon individuals to furnish labour in kind for the construction and repair of roads.—Note of the Translator.

even of the little skill requisite for such a task ; that, under pretence of their work being done without interruption, they had it allotted to them at some leagues from their habitations ; and that the roads, from being badly planned, or of bad materials, were frequently to be made over again ; (a necessary consequence of a system, where it seemed allowable to be prodigal of labour, since it cost nothing to the royal treasure, and where the engineer had the fatal opportunity of covering over his faults at the expence of the sweat and blood of the poor ;) the *Corvée*, when thus described, must appear one of the most cruel servitudes, and one of the most burthensome taxes to which a people can be condemned.—It has the farther property of falling directly on the poor. The principle adopted in it being that of exacting the labour in kind, it could only be imposed on those capable of working : and the plan of it being new, no antient usage, no pri-

vilege could be pleaded as an exemption from it; whence it naturally happened, that it was one of the taxes from which there were the most extensive exemptions.

M. Turgot proposed to those districts which bordered upon the principal roads, that they should execute the task imposed on them, by means of hired labour; the cost of which was to be levied by a rate proportioned to the rate of the land-tax, an abatement being made in the latter corresponding to the amount they expended. This abatement in the land-tax was afterwards distributed in favour of each parish, as in the case of those abatements that are made in it on account of local calamities. The preservation of the roads was in like manner settled by smaller assessments; and daily attention made the cost less, as well as prevented the decay of the roads with more certainty than the *Corvées*, which could at most be made only twice a year,  
and



and which could not be performed with the same degree of skill. As to the formation of roads, it was conducted with superior œconomy and superior solidity. The magistrate was the person who furnished new lights both to the engineers and contractors, and he perfected the mode of constructing roads. Thus every thing odious in the *Corvées*, every thing that bespoke constraint and personal slavery, all that introduced among the people famine, despair, and death, were banished. No grievance remained except that of the unequal distribution of the burthen, a grievance which it was not in the power of an intendant to remove.

It is not indeed to his power, that we are to ascribe the reform that has already been mentioned ; but to the authority of reason, and that confidence which virtue inspires. A too fatal experience had taught the people to be jealous of their governors ; they had seen

the most solemn promises violated, the most cruel vexations disguised under the veil of public utility, and pretended good made the pretext for actual oppression. The people therefore, whose concurrence was necessary to the success of M. Turgot's operations, appeared at first not without fear to consent to them. But his conduct, uniformly governed by reason, justice, and humanity, soon triumphed over their scruples; and this triumph was one of the most difficult and most grateful that virtue ever obtained. In order to inform the people at large respecting the nature of his plan and their true interests, he addressed himself to the curates of the different parishes. The letters written by him upon this occasion, in which he entered into the most minute details, and omitted nothing to make himself intelligible to the country people, and to speak to their reason, or rather to supply them with reason, are still extant. And what idea do they  
not

not give us of the grandeur and benevolence of his mind, when we recollect, that the man, who thus employed some of the most precious moments of his life in writing, and in repeating things so familiar and so simple; was the same man who, hurried along by an irresistible propensity, had penetrated the depths of metaphysic, had studied and endeavoured to fathom every science, and who, in fine, had at this very time accomplished the business of reducing every branch and distribution of political science into one system, the most extensive and complete that human understanding ever conceived?

The *militia* was another considerable grievance to the country people. It is a singular phenomenon that it has been found practicable to render the character of a soldier odious and disgraceful, in the midst of a nation naturally brave and active; but the soldier of the militia had not the merit of a voluntary enlistment. The  
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precariousness of his situation discouraged him in many cases from the exertions of industry. Confounded with the people in the article of dress, and exercised too seldom to be classed among the military, he lost his liberty without the compensation either of a respectable character, or of a secure subsistence. It had lately been conceived that the militia would no longer be a matter of grievance, if the voluntary contributions, which, from a natural impulse of justice and humanity, the communities had been induced to make in favour of the militia, were strictly prohibited.

M. Turgot felt the injustice of compelling a man to embrace, against his will, a perilous profession, without deigning even to pay him the price of his liberty; and how completely too in our political constitutions the distribution of labour, the nature of war, the form of our armies, and the principles of our military art, render inapplicable to modern nations the maxim of antiquity, which

which called out every citizen to the defence of his country. But if M. Turgot was unable to abolish the grievance generally, he was desirous at least to put a stop to the particular disorders of his province. In a mountainous country, and among dispersed cottages, the desire of escaping from this grievous imposition produced fugitives, in proportion to the hopes of success in their attempt. The law, which declared the fugitives to have become *ipso facto* soldiers of the militia, excited the desire of taking them up. Each community was interested in increasing the number of its members to be drawn for the militia; and each family regarded the exemption claimed by its neighbour, as an augmentation of its own personal risk of incurring what had become so terrible to their prejudices. At the moment when the drawing of lots was to take place, the communities were seen pursuing, with arms in their hands, the fugitives that skulked in the woods, and violently

violently disputing with each other the men which each of them claimed as its own. The operations of husbandry were suspended, and feuds were excited between parishes and families, which the continual presence of their object, and the want of a variety of occupation, rendered irreconcilable. Blood was sometimes spilt; and courage was exerted to decide who should have the privilege of being exempted from exerting it.

M. Turgot put a stop to these disorders, by obliging the communities to resign the execution of the law into the hands of government; and by taking care that it should be administered with that impartial justice, which gains confidence and reconciles men to severity. He struck at the root of the evil, by permitting a fund to be formed by the members of each community, which was perfectly free and subject only to their own regulations, for making service in the militia voluntary. This method of raising  
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ing soldiers is at once the most just, the most noble, the most æconomical, the most certain, and the best calculated for forming good troops; and cannot fail of gaining the preference at least over those, which a contempt for the human species, and respect for established usages, have occasioned to be adopted or continued.

Limoufin, during the administration of M. Turgot, experienced two successive years of scarcity. No man was better convinced, that unrestrained liberty, and protection to magazines and to the speculations of commerce, were the only means to prevent or to repair this mischief. The scarcity of provisions, by raising their price, augments the interest which each proprietor has to carry them where the scarcity is greatest: while laws of police, forced sales, and regulations of price, only oppose barriers to this natural impulse, and deprive the public of this resource. Besides the evil  
they

they produce of themselves, they contribute to expose the trader to the vexations of petty officers, and to the violence of the populace, whose terror and disquietude are excited or kept up by the spectacle of a restless and turbulent legislation. They falsely impute the calamity to the dealers, who come to the public succour; because they regard them as the agents of government, or because they see them to be the objects of suspicion to the magistrates. They ascribe their distresses to their chiefs, because the tenor of their conduct proclaims that they believe themselves to have the power of repairing it.—M. Turgot knew likewise that these fatal precautions in times of scarcity, have the more lasting, the more general, and the equally mischievous effect, of preventing the establishment of a regular commerce of grain; and by that means rendering the subsistence of the people for ever precarious.

His only object therefore in this period

riod of calamity, was to give every extension in his power to the freedom of trade with respect to provisions. He took care not to discourage that trade, by supplying the wants of the people from any other source, and employed the powers of government to no other purpose than that of protecting that trade from the prejudices of the populace. He had accordingly the consolation to see this commerce, thus abandoned to itself, provide for the public subsistence, in spite of the obstacles which the situation of the province opposed to his operations.

But the freedom that was requisite was not yet complete. The custom of fixing the price of bread was established in the towns. M. Turgot perceived that the bakers, who possessed an exclusive privilege, and who were subject to this regulation, took advantage of it to raise the bread to a price, beyond what it ought to bear compared with that of corn.



corn. He suspended the exercise of their privilege, but allowed them the liberty of selling bread at any price they pleased. The price soon fell, and the country communities, even from the distance of five leagues, brought bread to the town, made under the auspices of liberty, and consequently sold at a cheaper rate.

But if government in times of scarcity owe to the people in general only liberty of commerce and protection, it owes assistance to the indigent; but that assistance ought to be the fruit of their own industry. The acknowledged integrity of the intendant proved in this instance a succour to the miserable. As he had never asked any thing for himself, he easily obtained what he asked for his province; and the minister could not but believe those succours necessary, when he learned by the public voice, that the intendant did not solicit them, till he had at first relieved the people, by distributing  
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among them both his own income, and other sums which he had borrowed in his own name.

Some time after this successful experiment had confirmed M. Turgot in the truth of his principles, the minister of finance consulted the intendants of the kingdom upon the laws respecting the commerce of grain.

This subject seemed to have been exhausted in a number of excellent works; but M. Turgot thinking himself called upon to explain his sentiments, discussed the subject in seven letters of considerable length, on principles of deeper research, and with more enlarged views. He there demonstrates, that the freedom of the commerce of grain tends to increase the commodity, by increasing as well the motives as methods of extending and improving cultivation; and that to maintain this freedom, is the only mode, either of producing a constant commerce, which may repair the effects of local  
F                      scarcity,

scarcity, and provide resources against years of calamity; or of reducing the average price of corn, and diminishing its variations. Of these objects the last is the most important, since it is by the average value of corn that the amount of wages and the price of most provisions are regulated; so that wherever these variations are moderate, the price of labour will always be adequate to the support of the people, and their industry as well as their subsistence be constantly secured. In fine, he demonstrates that the freedom of this commerce is equally profitable to the landlord, the farmer, the consumer, and the hired labourer; that the more any commodity is to be considered as one of the necessities of life, the more ought its commerce to be free; and that prohibitory laws, far from being excused by necessity or utility, are detrimental and calamitous to those they are meant to favour; as well as unjust towards those against whom  
5 their



their operation is directed. He refutes the apprehensions that may be entertained of the effects of this freedom, by showing that every disorder, tumult, sedition, and even famine itself, are the fruit of those very laws which are intended to prevent them; and that these laws are the only source of the duration of real famine, and the failure of supply, as well as of the prejudices, the terrors, and the violences of the populace.

Unfortunately three of these letters no longer exist; but those which remain, at the same time that they excite our just regret, form a precious monument which may one day prove a public blessing, when time, which extinguishes the prepossessions of personal resentment and party spirit, shall have given to the name of Turgot the authority due to his genius and his virtues.

These letters were written in a period of three weeks, during a progress that M. Turgot made through his province.

Some of them were the business only of a single evening, in the midst of all the details of his office, not one of which was neglected: and among all the works he has left, this is one of those in which the precision of his ideas, that order which was become habitual in him, and the depth and versatility of his understanding, are most conspicuous.

The minister to whom these papers were addressed, commended M. Turgot, and issued prohibitory edicts. Unfortunately, in political questions, the decision of statesmen is less the result of their reasoning than of their disposition and their character. The understanding of every man is able to see the same truth, but it is not every man who has the courage to reduce it into practice. Men endeavour to doubt the propriety of what they do not chuse to perform; and every opinion, the adoption of which requires a contempt for prejudice and intrigue, and more zeal for the public than for our personal

personal interest, can be adopted by none but men of courage and virtue.

M. Turgot had another opportunity of displaying his zeal for the freedom of trade, or rather for that justice which demands that every one should be permitted the free use of his lawful property (for however useful may be the freedom of trade, it has an argument on its side still more unanswerable than its utility). It is well known that *loans of money*, payable at a certain time, with interest at any rate whatever; and loans of every kind, which bear an interest higher than five per cent., are considered by the laws of France as illegal contracts, and even as crimes. And yet commerce cannot be carried on without loans payable at a fixed time, and bearing interest at a rate mutually agreed on. This liberty is necessary, because the interest of money must naturally be regulated by the amount of the profits of each species of commerce, by the risks to which that commerce is



exposed, and by the greater or less degree of credit due to the borrower. The device which was resorted to, in order to reconcile the law with the necessity of the case, was this : the law was suffered to remain dormant, but subject to be called into action at the dictate of prejudice, of clamour, and at the caprice of every judge. The consequence has been, that those who lend their money being continually exposed to the loss of their capital, to the disgrace affixed to actions which the law prohibits, and even to ignominious condemnations, indemnify themselves by exacting a very high interest.

Nor is this all. A single prosecution commenced by a fraudulent debtor, is sufficient, by the terror it creates, to suspend the commerce of a whole town, or an entire province. Thus it happened at Angoulême in 1770. Some bankrupts, in order to escape a just condemnation, had formed a plan of charging their creditors with the crime of usury. A number

ber of debtors, not more refined in their principles, followed the example, and threatened to inform against their creditors, if they did not remit their demand of interest, and even in some cases of a part of the principal. The rigour of the prosecutions, and the favour which these informants found from the courts, completed the disorder. The trade of Angoulême was on the point of being destroyed; the alarm had reached many of the commercial towns of the kingdom; and administration thought themselves obliged to consult the intendant of the province where it began.

The report of M. Turgot is a complete treatise upon loans. The liberty of making loans upon what terms men please, is a natural consequence of the establishment of property; and a very moderate share of understanding is sufficient to discover, that though the lender may, by exacting too rigorous conditions, show himself to be wanting in humanity, yet he

cannot be guilty of a violation either of law or justice, by exercising his natural right of disposing of his own property upon what terms he pleases. But though the question of right in this business be so exceedingly simple, the paper of M. Turgot is only on that account the more calculated to display his genius and his character. He did not think that he could degrade himself by combating seriously opinions the most absurd, when he considered them as dangerous. He examines in his report the arguments drawn from policy, from law, and from religion, upon which the regulations of what has been called usury have been founded, and traces their origin and progress ; and he condescends to demonstrate, that even should we debase our reason so far as to decide a question of morality and justice in conformity to our ideas of theology, the cause is not even in this mode of proceeding to be supported, except by a false interpretation of  
the



the authorities to which the appeal is made.

M. Turgot presents us in this treatise with an idea equally perspicuous and novel, respecting legal interest, which is not and cannot be any thing else than the average price of interest calculated, like that of any common commodity, upon actual observation. The business of law therefore is the same in both cases ; that is, to fix a price only where it has not been or could not be fixed by particular contracts.

The occupations of his office did not hinder M. Turgot, we must not say from meditating, and increasing his knowledge (for that is a kind of appetite too imperious to be resisted by a genius of his rank) but from composing several works. We shall here only mention an Essay on the *Formation of Wealth* : a performance valuable for the profound and acute analysis which it contains, for the simplicity of its principles, and the extent of  
its

its consequences ; in which one is led on, by a chain of truths founded in nature, to the solution of the most important problems of political œconomy. This Essay may even be considered as the germ of the treatise on the *Wealth of Nations*, written by the celebrated Smith ; a work, unfortunately for the happiness of mankind, hitherto too little known in Europe ; and the author of which can only be reproached, for having depended too little, in some respects, upon the irresistible force of reason and truth\*.

Another

\* It is at least to this cause that we think ourselves obliged to impute what seems to be defective in his opinion of what he styles the agricultural system, in his disquisitions upon taxation, and in his ideas concerning the expence of public education and religious worship ; upon which subjects he appears not to have the same accuracy and precision that are to be admired in the rest of his work. We must ascribe too to the same cause the sort of slight with which he treats, as well the writers to whom he gives the appellation of *French Oeconomists*, as the question respecting the establishment of one universal tax ; which has drawn him into some errors,

Another work of M. Turgot, written at this period, deserves attention : it is upon the subject of *mines and quarries*. He deduces the laws which ought to regulate the working of mines, and the distribution of the property in them, from the principles of natural justice ; and reduces them to a few simple and general rules. One is astonished, in reading this book, to see that the laws respecting an object, which has been hitherto by all nations subjected to arbitrary principles of advantage and convenience, are capable of being so clearly inferred from the most general and unquestionable principles of natural law. But, as we shall have occasion to observe hereafter, M. Turgot saw that the whole system of civil jurisprudence might be considered in the same light, and might be deduced entirely from the same principles.

errors, and led him to commit some injustice. He has, besides, been guilty of some inaccuracies of trifling importance, in facts respecting France.

## CHAPTER



## CHAPTER IV.

SO many labours—a love of justice ever accompanied with compassionate goodness—a mind incapable of yielding to seduction or fear—and a zeal for the public good, as distinct from the love of fame, and from personal ambition, as human nature can permit—entitled M. Turgot not only to the blessings of the people of his province, and the friendship and admiration of the few persons who knew him intimately (and who, to use the expression of one of them \*, “congratulated themselves upon having been born in the age in which he lived”), but gained him the applause of all who were not afraid of the imputation of virtue: And at the death of Louis the Fifteenth, the public voice, which that of interest or of fear did not yet presume to contradict, called him to the first offices of govern-

\* The archbishop of Aix.

ment; as a man who, to all the improvement that study could procure, united the experience which results from the habits of business.

The ministers who were in place during the last years of that long reign, had terrified the nation rather than oppressed it. The history of their administration affords no instance of laws similar to those which were passed at a period that ignorance still regrets, and which were the work of men upon whom, at this very time, eulogiums full of the most ridiculous exaggeration were lavished \*. But government, by affecting to despise public opinion, armed it against themselves: and though the evils that resulted from anarchy only were felt, the evils that belong to despotism were imagined. The finances were in disorder, and the disorder

\* Consult the laws of Colbert; and then read, if you can, his panegyric, which gained the prize from the French Academy in the year 1773. [N.B. This panegyric is understood to have been written by Mr. Necker.—Additional note by the Translator.]

was

was believed irreparable. The resources were real and great, but credit was annihilated. The nation, frightened and tired with accumulated abuses, demanded a reforming minister. It called for a man whose genius could see the whole extent of the evil, and could find the remedy; whose courage was not afraid of obstacles, and whose virtue could resist corruption. It called for M. Turgot. Its voice was heard, and he was declared minister of the marine.

*I am not acquainted with the marine,* said M. Turgot. Yet he perfectly understood geography—naval, mercantile, political, and philosophical. He had studied the theory of naval tactics, he understood that of constructing vessels, and that of all the different arts necessary in building, rigging, and fitting them out. He was acquainted with the astronomical operations which serve to direct their route, and the instruments that have been invented to give exactness to these operations;



tions ; and he was able to decide between the merit of different methods for the purpose. When compared with others, he might have considered himself as possessing great information ; but it was not thus that he judged of himself. He felt that the practice of navigation, and the habit of observation respecting those arts, with the principles of which he was alone acquainted, were wanting to him ; as well as a sufficient degree of mathematical science, to enter into and apply those admirable theories, which ought to be made the foundation of some important parts of naval science.

To compare one's self with others, in order to be proud of one's superiority, seemed to him a weakness ; and, on the other hand, to compare the knowledge one has acquired with the immense extent of nature, appeared to him to be a false philosophy, fit only to produce a dangerous inactivity. The comparison which he thought alone calculated to enable

able a man of good sense to judge of his attainments, was that between his own actual knowledge, and that which the age he lived in enabled him to acquire; and there is no man whom even this comparison ought not to render very modest.

We will mention only two incidents respecting the naval administration of M. Turgot, which lasted only a month. He caused the workmen in the dockyards of Brest to be paid eighteen months of the arrears which were due to them; and he proposed to the king to bestow upon the celebrated Euler, a donation of a thousand roubles [£.225.], in consideration of this great geometrician having condescended, after publishing a very deep treatise upon naval science, to comprise, in a very short publication, all that theory has yet ascertained upon this subject, or that may be applied to practice.

On the twenty-fourth of August 1774, M. Turgot was removed from the administration of the marine to that of the finances.

finances. The alteration which his friends perceived in him at the moment of this removal, is perhaps one of those traits that best open to us his heart.

He was by no means ignorant that the administration of the marine was a post more certain in its tenure, and more out of the reach of political storms. Accustomed as he had long been to reflect upon every object of political œconomy, he perceived, that by the adoption of new principles, and by assuming justice and liberty as the basis of his new administration, he might with facility produce an important revolution in commerce; destroy that despotic avarice which at present lays Asia waste; and render the French colonies happy and powerful, as well as attached to the mother country, not by their weakness and necessities, but from interest and from gratitude, and make their existence, which is now so precarious, secure by the gradual introduction of wise laws for the abolition of negro slavery, that reproach

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of



of modern nations. He knew with respect to all these objects, that the example of one great nation would be followed by all the rest, and intitle the minister with whom it originated to the gratitude of mankind. He knew still farther with what facility, by means of new voyages adapted to a digested and comprehensive system, he might in a short time increase the extent of human knowledge, enrich science, and perfect art \*, as well as scatter the seeds of reason and happiness through every part of the globe. Those who knew him could not entertain a doubt that the detail of the preparations for these expeditions, and for the consequences of them, afforded him an inexhaustible source of the most interesting gratifications. Nevertheless, when M.

\* In 1776, M. Turgot sent M. Dombey, a learned botanist, to Peru. In 1785, that gentleman arrived at Cadiz, upon his return with a rich harvest of discoveries in natural history, and a numerous collection of plants and minerals.

Turgot

Turgot quitted this branch of administration, he appeared delivered from a weight that bore him down. Not all the dangers of the post he accepted, nor the obstacles, the opposition, the disgust even which he foresaw would attend it, could outweigh in his eyes the circumstance of quitting an office, where some parts of the necessary information were wanting to him, for another for the discharge of which all the studies of his life had prepared him. The hope of producing a greater public good he embraced with avidity. The obstacles, the difficulties attending it, only awakened his courage; though a few days before the single fear of being sometimes obliged to pronounce upon questions, of which he was not completely master, had filled him with apprehension.

## CHAPTER V.

The letter which M. Turgot addressed to the king upon receiving this fresh mark of his confidence, as Comptroller-General of the Finances, is well known.

August 24, 1774.

“ Sire,

“ Having quitted your majesty’s closet  
 “ full of the anxiety which the immensity  
 “ of the trust that you have imposed upon  
 “ me impresses my mind, and agitated by  
 “ the sentiments that the affecting goodness by which you condescended to encourage me has excited, I hasten to lay at  
 “ your feet my respectful gratitude, together  
 “ with the absolute dedication of my whole  
 “ life.

“ You have been pleased to permit me to  
 “ lay before you upon paper the engagement  
 “ which your majesty has entered into with  
 “ yourself to support me in the execution of  
 “ those plans of œconomy, which, at every  
 “ moment,



“ moment, and in the present more than in  
“ any other, are of indispensable necessity.  
“ I could have wished to have detailed the  
“ reflections that are suggested to me by the  
“ present posture of the finances ; but the  
“ time will not permit me ; and I reserve  
“ myself for a more ample explanation when  
“ I shall have obtained more accurate in-  
“ formation. I confine myself in the pre-  
“ sent moment, Sire, to call to your recol-  
“ lection three words :

“ No national bankruptcy,

“ No increase of taxes,

“ No new loans.

“ No bankruptcy ; neither avowed nor  
“ disguised under compulsory reductions.

“ No increase of taxes. The reason your  
“ majesty will find in the situation of your  
“ people, and still more in your own heart.

“ No new loans ; for every loan, by di-  
“ minishing the amount of the free revenue,  
“ necessarily produces at last a bankruptcy,  
“ or an increase of taxes. In a period of  
“ peace money should not be borrowed, un-

“ less to liquidate old debts, or to discharge  
 “ others bearing a higher interest.

“ To obtain these three points, there is  
 “ but one method, that of reducing the ex-  
 “ penditure below the receipt, and so much  
 “ below it as to leave twenty millions,  
 “ [£. 833,333.] every year for the redemp-  
 “ tion of former debts. Without this pre-  
 “ caution, the first cannon ball that is fired  
 “ will force the state to a public bankruptcy\*.

“ It is asked, in what is the retrenchment  
 “ to be made? And every department will  
 “ maintain that, as far as relates to itself,  
 “ there is scarcely a single expenditure which  
 “ is not indispensable. The reasons alledged  
 “ may be very good; but as there can be  
 “ none for performing impossibilities, it is re-  
 “ quisite that all these reasons should give way  
 “ to the irresistible necessity of œconomy.

“ It is this necessity then that calls upon  
 “ your

\* This observation must be understood according to M. Turgot's principles, who acknowledged no other method of maintaining public credit but œconomy.



“ your majesty to oblige each department to  
“ concert with the minister of the finances.  
“ It is indispensable that he should be allowed  
“ to discuss with each in your majesty’s pre-  
“ sence, the degree of necessity of its pro-  
“ posed expence. Above all it is requisite,  
“ Sire, when you have thus fixed upon the  
“ funds of each department, that you should  
“ forbid him who is charged with it to en-  
“ gage for any new expence, without hav-  
“ ing first consulted with the minister of  
“ finance on the means of supplying it. With-  
“ out this, each department will load itself  
“ with debts, which will still be the debts  
“ of your majesty, and the person directing  
“ the finances can never answer for any

nomy, good faith in the operations of the finances, and equitable laws. For the rest M. Turgot has explained himself upon this article in a Memoir dated April 1776, relative to the war which appeared inevitable between Great Britain and her colonies, and in which France might apprehend she would be involved. He there observes, that the probability of success, and still more the probability that the war would be of short duration, might maintain the national credit.



“ correspondence between the expenditure  
“ and the receipt.

“ Your majesty knows, that one of the  
“ greatest obstacles to œconomy is the mul-  
“ titude of solicitations to which you are  
“ perpetually exposed, and to which the too  
“ great facility of your predecessors in ac-  
“ ceding, has unfortunately given sanction.  
“ You must, Sire, against your bounty be  
“ armed by your bounty; and consider  
“ whence the money that you may distribute  
“ among your courtiers is drawn; and con-  
“ trast the misery of those from whom it  
“ is sometimes necessary to wrest it, by the  
“ most rigorous measures, with the situation  
“ of those who have the best title to your  
“ liberality.

“ There are favours, to the conferring of  
“ which it has seemed the more easy to give  
“ way, because they do not immediately press  
“ upon the public treasury: Such are inte-  
“ rests and covert partnerships and privileges.

“ Yet these are of all others the most  
“ dangerous and the most liable to abuse.  
“ All profit upon the public taxes that is

“ not

“ not absolutely necessary for their collec-  
 “ tion, should be a fund consecrated to the  
 “ relief of the contributors, and to the ne-  
 “ cessities of the state. All participation in  
 “ the profit of the receivers-general, is a  
 “ source of corruption to men of rank, and  
 “ of vexation to the people, by creating  
 “ powerful and concealed protectors of every  
 “ kind of abuse,

“ A hope may be indulged, that by the  
 “ improvement of agriculture, by the sup-  
 “ pression of abuses in the collection of the  
 “ revenue, and by a more equal distribution  
 “ of the taxes, the people may be sensibly  
 “ relieved, without greatly diminishing the  
 “ public income. But unless œconomy be  
 “ first adopted, no reform will be possible ;  
 “ for there is no reform which does not in-  
 “ volve the risque of some interruption in  
 “ the collection of the finances ; and one  
 “ must expect a multiplicity of embarrass-  
 “ ments which will be created by the ma-  
 “ noeuvres and clamours of men of every  
 “ description, interested in perpetuating these  
 “ abuses,



“ abuses, as there is not one of those that is  
“ not the support of somebody.

“ While the finances of the nation rest  
“ continually upon expedients for the supply  
“ of public service, your majesty will be  
“ continually dependent upon the financiers,  
“ and these have it always in their power  
“ to defeat the most important operations by  
“ the manoeuvres of their situation. No  
“ meliorations, either in the taxes for the  
“ relief of the people, or in the arrange-  
“ ments of legislation and internal govern-  
“ ment, will in any sort be practicable.  
“ Authority will never be at rest, because  
“ it will never be popular, and the uneasi-  
“ ness and discontents of the people are at  
“ all times the engines employed by disaffect-  
“ ed men, and men of intrigue, to excite  
“ troubles. It is then upon œconomy prin-  
“ cipally that depend the prosperity of your  
“ majesty's reign, the internal tranquillity  
“ of your dominions, the respect of foreign  
“ nations, the people's happiness, and your  
“ own. I must observe to your majesty,  
“ that



“ that I enter upon my office at a conjunc-  
“ ture, rendered unfavourable by appre-  
“ hensions entertained of scarcity; and  
“ which are the more discouraging on ac-  
“ count of the fermentation of men’s minds  
“ for several years past, of the fluctuation  
“ experienced in the principles of ministers,  
“ of certain injudicious operations, and  
“ above all of a harvest that appears to  
“ have been scanty. Upon this, as upon  
“ many other subjects, I do not ask of your  
“ majesty to adopt my principles, without  
“ their being first discussed and examined,  
“ either by yourself, or by confidential per-  
“ sons in your presence. But when you shall  
“ have acknowledged their justice and their  
“ necessity, I intreat you to support their  
“ execution with firmness, without suffering  
“ yourself to be discouraged by clamours  
“ which it is impossible to avoid in such a  
“ concern, whatever conduct be adopted,  
“ whatever system pursued.

“ Such are the points which your ma-  
“ jesty has been pleased to permit me to re-  
“ call to your mind. You will not forget  
“ that

*“ that in receiving the post of comptroller-  
“ general, I have felt all the value of the  
“ confidence with which you honour me.  
“ I have felt that you intrust me with the  
“ happiness of your people, and if I may  
“ be permitted so to express myself, with  
“ the office of making your person and au-  
“ thority beloved: but I have not been in-  
“ sensible to the extent of the danger which  
“ I encounter. I knew that I should stand  
“ alone in a contest against abuses of every  
“ kind, against the efforts of those who be-  
“ nefit by these abuses, and against the  
“ multitude of prejudices that oppose them-  
“ selves to every reform, and which are so  
“ powerful an engine in the hands of per-  
“ sons interested in rendering disorder per-  
“ petual. I shall even have to struggle  
“ against the generous temper and innate  
“ goodness of your majesty, and of the per-  
“ sons most dear to you. I shall be fear-  
“ ed, and even hated, by the greatest part  
“ of your court, by all who solicit favours.  
“ Every refusal will be laid to my charge;  
“ I shall be held up as austere, for having  
“ repre-*



“ represented to your majesty that you ought  
“ not to enrich even those you love at the  
“ expence of the subsistence of your people.  
“ The very people in whose cause I shall  
“ have sacrificed myself, are so easy to be  
“ deceived, that I shall perhaps incur their  
“ aversion by the measures I shall have em-  
“ ployed to defend them. I shall be ca-  
“ lumniated, and perhaps with so much  
“ speciousness, as to deprive me of your ma-  
“ jesty’s confidence. I shall not regret the  
“ loss of an appointment to which I never  
“ aspired ; I am ready to resign it into  
“ your hands the moment I can no longer  
“ hope to be useful in it. But your esteem,  
“ my reputation for integrity, and the pub-  
“ lic approbation of my character, which  
“ determined your choice in my favour, are  
“ dearer to me than life ; and these I may  
“ lose without meriting in my own judg-  
“ ment the slightest reproach.

“ Your majesty will remember, that it is  
“ upon the faith of your promises that I  
“ take upon myself a burthen, which is  
“ perhaps heavier than I can bear ; that

“ it



*“ it is to yourself personally, to the honest  
“ man, to one that is just and good rather  
“ than to the king, that I abandon myself.*

*“ I venture thus to repeat, what you have  
“ already been pleased to hear and approve.  
“ The affecting kindness with which you  
“ have condescended to press my hands be-  
“ tween your own, as if to accept the de-  
“ dication of myself to your service, will  
“ never efface itself from my memory. It  
“ will support my courage. It has insepa-  
“ rably united my personal happiness to the  
“ interest, the glory, and the happiness of  
“ your majesty.”*

The functions and the duties of a comptroller-general of the finances in France, are these : The making of laws with respect to finance, commerce, and manufactures ; the detail of their administration, and the decision of every particular question respecting them : the superintendence of all public works and establishments, and the inspection over the constitutions and revenues of every corporation,

poration, from the states of the most considerable provinces to the principal officers of the meanest village: the care of maintaining such an order in the raising the subsidies as shall render the collection certain, without being burthenfome, and of insuring the funds necessary for the public expences. He must examine into the necessity, or at least the utility, of those disbursements; establish severe rules which shall check depredations, and a well-judged œconomy which shall diminish their pressure; and, finally, he must support the national credit, and watch over the punctual discharge of all engagements contracted in the name of the sovereign.

But legislation in matters of finance had long had but one principle; a desire of augmenting the revenues of the sovereign, but without exciting clamours, too dangerous to the minister. The consequence of adopting this principle was, that the regulations which were made

bore hard only upon the people, and principally upon the country people, who, being always scattered, could neither force an audience nor inspire terror.

Commerce had been constantly sacrificed to views of revenue; and if at any time some rare occurrences had permitted the encouragement of trade to be the real motive, and not the pretext of certain laws, yet the interest of particular towns and *that* often misunderstood, the opinion of a few mercantile men who were either ignorant or insincere, and the example and political prejudices of foreign nations, determined the nature of these laws. The solicitations of rich merchants had sometimes obtained a hearing, but scarcely ever the general interests of commerce.

The industry of the nation was not less fettered with vexatious regulations and fiscal laws. The details of administration, and the decision of particular causes, were directed by the same principles, but with this difference, that the oppressive  
five



five system was here indulged with less restraint, as its operations, by being more confined and private, escaped with more certainty the public censure.

The high roads kept in repair by the *Corvées* exhausted the country, and constantly twice a year brought back slavery, misery, and despair.

The internal navigation of the kingdom languished in the midst of a thousand projects, the offspring of avarice or pride. The income of the greatest part of the towns, already loaded with local impositions, and administered by officers not chosen by the towns, or else forced to purchase the right of choosing them; was finally absorbed by the luxurious expences of the richer citizens, and dedicated to pleasures or vanity.

The produce of the taxes, diminished by the multiplied channels through which it passed to the public treasury, and almost completely swallowed up by anticipations, was no longer adequate even to the ne-

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cessities

cessities of the state. The engagements of government had been violated, the annual payments had been retarded, and every year some petty expedient, always burthensome and frequently oppressive, served to help out the public resources, which were in continual danger of failing. Confidence was annihilated. Compulsory loans, which had been exacted from every company and from every corporation in succession, together with the habit of purchasing for a valuable consideration the signature of a few leading bankers, had accustomed the monied men to wish always to have a private credit opened between government and themselves\*. In fine, no other maxim was employed in the regulation of the expenditure, but that of the obligation under which the minister of finances

\* These bankers, employed by the predecessor of M. Turgot, and made desperate by seeing themselves deprived of the source of their profits, fought to ruin him by the most culpable manœuvres.

was

was placed, to purchase by his facility the silence or the protection of all who were possessed of authority or credit.

It was out of the midst of this chaos that a new administration was to be created, founded upon justice and directed to the good of the people. A virtuous man dared to undertake the task; equally convinced that to exterminate the evil it was necessary only to pursue the simplest principles, (which he was astonished to find were little known,) and feeling also in the goodness of his heart an energy which enabled him to set all outward obstacles at defiance, though he disguised none of them to himself.

The people were oppressed by a multiplicity of taxes, and the state of affairs did not admit of their reduction. The only method to restore the public credit was by a faithful discharge of the arrears of debt as they occurred; and this made it necessary to keep up the revenue. The fruits of œconomy were slow and uncer-



tain. A change in the form of the taxes required time, and would have met with obstacles; and if introduced upon principles of justice, and so as to avoid bringing a temporary evil upon a part of the citizens, might demand sacrifices on the part of the treasury.

But if it was impossible to reduce the amount of the taxes, it was however practicable to increase the ability of the people to bear them; and this was to procure them a substantial relief. The enjoyment of a part of their natural rights might be restored to them; a part at least of the vexations under which they had long groaned might be dispensed with; and this task was the first object of M. Turgot's care.

His first regulations gave freedom to the commerce of corn within the kingdom. The benefit which this law was calculated to produce was that of giving new life to agriculture by the encouragement resulting from the proprietors being  
sure

sure of disposing of its produce at their own discretion. It tended to augment at once the quantity of the necessaries of life, and the net produce of the land; to prepare for the people the resource of such a stock of corn, as commerce might provide against unfavourable seasons and local scarcity; and to render wages at all times sufficient for the support of those who received them, by making less frequent, and less considerable, the variations in the price of corn—In fine, by the establishment of a constant and certain commerce, to place the landlord and farmer, the government and people, out of the reach of a real decline of necessaries, of vexatious and oppressive laws, and of disquiet and intestine troubles; the cruel and infallible result of every kind of prohibitory system.

M. Turgot felt how much an absolute freedom of exportation to *foreign* parts would add to the certainty of the public subsistence, by giving to commerce an

additional activity, and more extensive depôts of corn, and by calling in the assistance of foreign nations in bad years. But he saw at the same time that this liberty would cause disquietudes, which, though chimerical in themselves, would produce real evil ; and that foreign commerce, always very feeble in comparison of that which is internal, would remain in a languid state, as long as internal commerce continued infirm and unsettled. He saw, in short, that in the present instance, where there had been unfavourable seasons for several years, the advantages of a free export were almost as chimerical as the pretended dangers of it, which appeared so terrible in the eyes of ignorance.

To restore the commerce of corn and of flour to its natural liberty, was not all that was requisite to be done. Local restrictions opposed themselves to the effects that entire liberty would have produced. The exclusive privileges of bakers,  
the



the assize of bread, the obligation to grind corn at particular mills, and the several market-dues upon corn when sold, were so many fetters which it was necessary to break. They were all abolished during the administration of M. Turgot, except indeed the manorial privileges as to mills, which he suffered still to subsist; because he was unwilling either to take away without compensation a claim founded on prescription, and sometimes even on a voluntary compact; or to make the nation purchase at too high a price rights, which would never have been valuable, if fraud supported by power had not made them so. But the liberty of the commerce of flour, by checking those unjust profits, would in a few years have shown the real value of the privilege, and the amount of the compensation which ought to be paid for it.

The monopoly of the bakers, and the assize of bread which is founded on it, vanished along with their corporate rights.

The tolls payable at markets, and which were exacted either by corporations or by individuals, had been suspended, and were to be wholly abolished upon indemnification of the claimants.

M. Turgot respected the right of property, and he the rather respected it, because he understood with more than common exactness what was its true extent. But tolls are not property; they are a local tax which was introduced in times of anarchy, when corporations and lords of manors shared between them a part of that prerogative of imposing taxes, which irregular and tumultuous assemblies at that time contested with a sovereign destitute of power.

Legal conveyances, or long possession, had sanctioned these rights. Bought and sold as real property, transmitted from family to family, the greater part had effaced in their progress the irregularity of their origin. In the mean time the right, which the nation, or the magistrate  
who

who possesses its power, has to regulate every impost in the manner most advantageous to the people, was not impaired. It is in its nature at once unalienable and incapable of suffering from prescription; and the sovereign power has retained the right of abolishing these imposts, from the moment it gives the possessors an indemnification equal to the injury they may sustain. To those who form accurate ideas, the suppression of such privileges will not seem an attack upon property; while the establishing of such, and the restraining by means of them the liberties of commerce, is an incontestible encroachment upon it.

Other antient privileges formed a similar obstacle to the circulation of the wines of a part of our provinces. These were abolished by an edict; and as entire a liberty of commerce was afforded to this commodity, (the most important in the kingdom after that of grain,) as the defective mode of collecting the tax upon  
it



it would allow.—A similar freedom for the articles of brandies was to have been made a sequel to this measure. Already some local restrictions had been abolished ; and the duties laid upon the exportation of this liquor were to have been annihilated : the distillation of brandy from the husk of the grape was to have been allowed ; and the spirits manufactured from grain, which are entirely prohibited, and those from cyder and perry, which are not allowed to pass out of the province in which they are distilled, were to have had a free circulation \*.

The direct advantage of all these laws was confined to such as had property to dispose of : that which resulted from the abolition of the *Corvées*, extended directly to the people. M. Turgot substituted for the latter a tax upon real property, which extended to all estates, whoever might be the proprietors. The enlightened

\* A part of these operations took place in 1784.

landholders

landholders felt how much they were benefited by this change, and that the rise of leases would more than compensate this light imposition. They could not conceal from themselves that the *Corvée* both of the farmers and day labourers made a part of the expences of agriculture and diminished the net produce, and that this tax was ultimately paid by themselves.

Of all the methods of defraying the expence of the public roads, that which M. Turgot was desirous to establish is the most equitable, because the contribution is paid by those to whom the roads are most useful, and in proportion to the advantage which they derive from them; it is also the least burthensome, because it is attended with no oppression, because the roads cost less, are better made, and require less repairs; and lastly, it is the most beneficial, because instead of being like the *Corvée* an actual slavery and a source of misery to the people, it offers them

them pay, which a wise administration may distribute and proportion to their emergencies. Meanwhile M. Turgot was obliged, after a long resistance, to exempt ecclesiastical property from this tax; and to join this immunity to the many the clergy before possessed, and to leave the surcharge which resulted to the people as an addition to those contributions which the clergy levy in their own name upon the various classes of subjects. The benefit however which followed from the suppression of the *Corvées* was still immense; and it would even be so, though the contribution should be levied exclusively upon persons liable to the *taille*; because it would still cost less to the people than the *Corvée* in kind, and could never occasion the same vexation, the same slavery, and the same calamities\*.

This

\* It has been asserted in some late publications, that an assessment proportioned to the *taille*, would have been preferable to one proportioned to the *vingtième* as proposed by M. Turgot. But



This edict further directed that the quantity of land which should at any time be taken

1. M. Turgot had proposed a contribution, levied indiscriminately upon all kinds of property; and yet was obliged by particular circumstances to exempt that of the clergy. He admitted this alteration with regret, and I am bold to say contrary to the wish of the wisest and most enlightened members of the clergy. They believed, and with reason, that if their body could hope to preserve their privileges some time longer, it must be by the voluntary sacrifice of the most odious part of them.

2. Although the clergy were indulged with this immunity, an augmentation of their free gift constituted a very simple means of repairing the injustice.

3. Supposing the exemption to exist, it was a less inconvenience than an assessment proportioned to the *taille*, which, in some places falls only upon the property of the lower class of people; in others upon property which these have enjoyed within a certain period; while in the rest it falls indiscriminately upon the property of the lower classes, and upon the profits of cultivators, of traders and artisans; from which again necessarily results a surcharge upon the people, and an exemption both for the noblesse and the clergy.

4. M. Turgot thought that, far from increasing taxes,

taken into any of the high roads should be estimated, and the value paid to the proprietors

taxes, which, like the *taille*, fall only on particular descriptions of men, it was in these taxes that every possible reduction should be made ; in order gradually to abolish those immunities which in taxation are necessarily unjust.

5. The existing irregularity in the distribution of the *vingtieme* was not a circumstance to deter M. Turgot ; because, previously to the reducing to practice his great projects for the reform of the taxes, he proposed to himself the abolition of the abuses which might exist in this distribution, by first fixing the total amount of the tax, and then dividing it in more accurate proportions ; an accuracy which was only to be looked for where the sum was fixed ; because in that case it is the immediate interest of every land owner to complain of the errors which are to the advantage of any other.

6. The idea that an assessment proportioned to the *taille*, could have less shocked the prejudices or the interest of certain bodies of men, was not calculated to make any impression on M. Turgot. It was his opinion, that when the supreme power arms itself for the defence of the people, when it gives its sanction to laws dictated by justice, it ought alike to despise the clamours of rapacity as of ignorance ; and that a minister cannot

proprieters out of the funds of the new contribution. Till then, in conformity to the principles of fiscal barbarity, this duty both of justice and humanity had been always dispensed with\*.

The only specious objection that was made to the plan of M. Turgot, was the fear that this contribution at some future period might be diverted to other purposes ; as if when the necessities of government demanded a new tax, the *Corvée* would not have been one of the most odious, and one which it would have had

cannot advise a prince to these dishonourable compliances, without betraying at once the confidence of his master, the rights of the subject, and the interests of the nation.

\* This provision of the edict was not expressly revoked at the time of the re-establishment of the *Corvées*, but it has been suffered to remain uninforced. M. de Cotte, who superintends the department of causeways and bridges, exerted his efforts in vain to induce the minister at that time in the direction of the finances, to put an end to this extreme and cruel oppression.

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the most fear in reviving; or as if the expence of maintaining or constructing the roads would not be one of the last, among the necessary expences which it would be disposed to sacrifice. There was a period indeed when government, either to humour the interests or prejudices of certain classes of individuals, or to avoid the alarm which might be taken by the establishment of a new tax, used to conceal real subsidies under a veil favourable to their own situation and fatal to the nation. But the ignorance under the cover of which these practices were ventured upon, no longer subsists; and the abuse made of it has enlightened the most uninformed; while the supreme power, become more stable, no longer needs deception\*.

By

\* The imbecility of a minister, his desire of building a momentary credit upon public error, and the ambition of usurping a name which he has neither talent nor virtue to deserve, may still sometimes lead to clandestine

By these different laws the slavery of the country was abolished; but the inhabitants of the towns had also their chains, which were to be broken, before all the classes of useful subjects could enjoy the dawn of a new system, founded upon beneficence and justice.

All persons in the several towns of France who had not been able to comply with certain formalities (frequently absurd, and always expensive) by which the title of *Masters* in the companies of tradesmen or artisans is acquired, were not permitted to employ their strength or their abilities as they pleased. These masters formed a little republic, the leaders of which, under the pretence of a

definite methods of augmenting the taxes; but the re-establishment of the *Corvées*, if they had once been suppressed for a few years, would never have been the expedient fixed upon. The minister who should re-establish the *Corvée*, and divert from its application the contribution which had replaced it, would scarcely dare to boast that he had not imposed a new tax.

I

police,

police, had carried to a height that it would have been difficult to have foreseen, the art of rendering still more grievous the chains of the unhappy workmen ; of loading the communities with useless expence ; and of rendering even the rank of masters insupportable to those who had nothing but their industry to depend upon. M. Turgot abolished this odious and ridiculous slavery.

The inhabitant of the towns at length found himself at liberty to use his limbs and his labour as he pleased ; a right which at this time was enjoyed in no other country of Europe, not even in those which make the greatest boast of their liberty \*. This right, which is one of the first that

\* The writer certainly alludes to England, where by the statute, 5 Eliz. c. 4. no person can exercise any trade which was in use at the time of passing the statute, unless he had been brought up in it seven years at the least as an apprentice ; nor can any person employ a workman who has not served a seven years apprenticeship, without incurring a penalty of forty shillings a month.—Note of the Translator.



nature has given us (and which may be considered as a necessary consequence of that of existing) seemed to be effaced from the recollection and the hearts of men; and was one of those rights of humanity which was lost in the night of barbarous times, and which our age has been the first to recover.

The advantages which sprang from the suppression of these corporate rights was not confined to this important act of justice: there resulted from it to the people, and to every class of subjects, a reduction in the price of bread, meat, and every kind of necessary, as well as of the productions of art: moreover, the practice of fixing the prices of the necessities of life disappeared with the exclusive privilege of vending them, which furnished the only specious pretext for the practice.—

M. Turgot by means of a compensation suppressed a multitude of petty offices, the very names of which were ridiculous and absurd, but which enjoyed privileges

oppressive to the people, and served as a pretext for a number of very complicated duties ; and by this accumulation of abuse exacted a most exorbitant return for the trifling benefit which their creation had produced.—The manufactures of France were also rescued from the yoke of tyranny, which Colbert imposed upon them, when he prescribed by law the size of different stuffs, and the modes of weaving and dying them, under pain of confiscation, penalties, and even corporal punishments. Such regulations could only have been dictated to this minister by ignorant manufacturers, who considered their ingenuity and practice as the boundaries of the progress of the arts, and imagined they could subject the necessities and the taste of all future ages to the fashion of their own. Some of these directions had even the inconvenience of being physically impracticable ; though there was not on that account the less rigour in the punishments imposed.

Finally,

Finally, this edict of M. Turgot permitted industry, which had hitherto been almost wholly shut up in towns, or obliged to pay a tribute to their inhabitants, to establish itself at pleasure in the country; and to fix upon those places which the low price of subsistence, or the facility of procuring materials, seem to have marked out for its true residence \*.

These

\* M. Turgot had excepted from the liberty granted to other professions those of the barbers, printers and booksellers, goldsmiths, and apothecaries. It may be of some use to give an account here of the motives for this exception.

1. The constitution of the company of barbers differed from that of other companies. They had converted the rank of master into a sort of office; it had been sold for the benefit of the revenue, and justice required that the purchasers should be reimbursed. But the inconveniencies which might arise from restraints upon an art of this kind, were not of sufficient importance to make it expedient to incur such an expence in the then situation of the finances. "In France," said one day the illustrious Franklin, "you have an



These general laws were accompanied with some particular ones which had the same

“ excellent resource for making war without any expence. You have only to consent as long as it lasts, not to dress your hair or to use powder. Your hair-dressers will form an army; you will pay them with their wages which you will then save; and the corn which was wasted in making powder, will provide them with subsistence.”

2. The rendering free the trade of the printer and bookseller, would necessarily have led to freedom in writing, and would besides have produced to authors a larger and less precarious profit from their performances; and this advantage is more considerable than it may at first appear. It would have freed authors from that state of dependence in which at present almost all of them live with respect to the favours of government; which is so injurious to the display of their talents, and the utility the public might derive from their works, and which may even prevent a great part of the advantage which the freedom of the press ought naturally to produce. In fact the necessity of being silent respecting the views manifested by administration, and the particular views of the individuals by whom it is influenced, and which is a consequence of this dependence, is as contrary to the public welfare, as to the real and permanent interest of the sovereign. Farther,

same object. A law, made under the pretext of the public good, compelled the

ther, if the trade of the bookseller were free, and the price of books reduced, instruction would be made attainable to a much greater number of men—These several advantages, M. Turgot felt; but he was obliged to respect the prejudices and the imaginary terrors which yet opposed themselves to the liberty of the people.

3. The trade of the goldsmith could not have been thrown open without a total change of the existing laws for regulating the commerce of articles of gold and silver. M. Turgot had formed the plan of this change, which, in some degree, was blended with the alterations he meditated in the management of the coin; with respect to which, it was his design that the gold and silver used should be without any alloy, and that each coin should bear a stamp expressing its weight, which should always be a very simple fraction of one certain weight.—He had long thought upon the means of introducing an universal measure, whose standard should be determined by a natural fact, depending on some one of those phenomena which are most constant in the order of the world (such as that of the length of the simple pendulum which vibrates seconds in a given latitude); and he was desirous of introducing one standard weight, which should be deter-



the butchers of Paris to borrow of a particular fund even money that they did not

mined in like manner by philosophical methods. The numeral value of coins, and the fractions of that value, would in that case have been referred to the proper divisions of weight. This, however, was to take place respecting one of the metals only; for the proportion of the value of gold and silver would have remained as variable as it is in its natural state.—The commerce of metals in the mean time was to be absolutely free. The law was merely to fix the price that the proprietor of ingots was to pay, if he were desirous of having them coined into money, or of exchanging them for money ready coined in the public mint.—The business of fining and of assaying was to have been equally free; only that there was to have been established in the principal towns assayers of known probity and skill, who were to have made the assays directed by administration, or by the courts of justice in contested cases; and to whom persons desirous of having their ingots marked with a stamp, to signify their standard, were to have applied. The price of these operations would have been so fixed as to secure to the assayers a sufficient salary without introducing a real tax; and individuals would have been free either to employ them, or to cause the metals in their possession to



not want, and the interest required for it was very exorbitant. — Another law, still

to be assayed by other persons at a lower price, at the risque of misplacing their confidence.

The same rule was to have been extended to the trade of the goldsmith, which would have become equally free. Trinkets would have been permitted to be made of metals of all standards. A public office was to have been opened, where for a moderate price a stamp was to be affixed, signifying the standard. But this stamp might have been dispensed with, and the buyer and seller left free to deal with each other, either under the seal of public authority, or under personal confidence. Thus security and liberty would have been conciliated to each other; and the advantages of ease and security to the market arising from the stamp would have been obtained, without subjecting individuals to an useless and compulsory trouble and expence.

All these operations would have preceded the new laws respecting coin; which could not have been established till the confidence inspired by the beneficent operations of government had permitted it to defy the murmurs of a crowd of men, whose profits are singly founded upon the errors of government, and who would certainly employ all the resources of the art of stock-

still under the same pretext, which has been so much abused, and whose real object

stock-jobbing to prevent light being thrown upon the secret of their speculations.

4. The same principles were to have been applied to the profession of apothecaries.—A certain number of men, subjected to strict examinations, and obliged to give proof of their ability and knowledge of their art, would have been established in the towns. To them the tribunals and the municipal corps could have referred all contested questions; and they alone would have furnished the medicines paid for by government, or employed in the public establishments.—But the trade of the apothecary would have been open to all. It was the duty of government, as M. Turgot conceived, to secure the vulgar and the uninformed from involuntary deception in these important subjects, and thus far to protect their property and lives; but that its cares ought to extend no farther, and that it had no right to prescribe the means, and then to compel the choice, or to dictate an exclusive confidence, because confidence, like opinion, must be entirely free. It will readily be perceived to how many other professions these principles apply, and in what manner they reconcile the vigilance incumbent upon the magistrate with the respect he owes to liberty.—For these reasons  
the



ject was the advantage of certain individuals, deprived the butchers of the free vent of their tallow. They were delivered from these fetters, which forced them to sell dear ; and at the same time the people were relieved from all the little exactions, of which the regulations put upon the butchers rendered them the victims, and obtained by the introduction of liberty and rivalry the advantage of having meat of a middling but wholesome quality, at a price proportioned to their ability.

the freedom of the profession of apothecaries could not be established without some precautions : but the rivalry between the apothecary and the vender of simple drugs, would have remedied in a great part the exorbitant price of medicines, which is caused by the exclusive privilege of the apothecaries, and which with respect to the poor nearly annihilates the advantages to be derived from their skill ; advantages, however, which are much less real than has been imagined.

These exceptions, therefore, which M. Turgot left in the edict which he formed, were not, as may have been said or even believed, restrictions of the principles of general and unbounded freedom of commerce and industry.

Another



Another law had given the Hôtel Dieu (or hospital) of Paris, the exclusive privilege of selling meat during Lent; that is, during an eighth part of the year. The people unable to live upon fish (on account of the duties that enhanced the price) were for a similar reason deprived of flesh provisions, and remained condemned to feed on unwholesome or disgusting food. M. Turgot abolished this privilege of the Hôtel Dieu, and substituted in its place a tax more than its equivalent. Thus he saved to the people the expence of an ill-administered regulation, at the same time that he encouraged the fisheries by suppressing the duties upon salt fish, and half of the duties upon fresh sea fish; and introduced cheapness and abundance into the capital.— M. Turgot saw still another advantage in this operation, that of abolishing one of the usurpations of ecclesiastical power. An abstinence from flesh provisions during Lent, and the intermission of labour upon  
upon

upon holidays, are laws that ought to be binding only upon the conscience, and cannot be supported by the force of government without injustice. No power can have a legitimate right to do this; because no power has a right to regulate opinions, or to forbid actions which are not contrary to justice\*.

The military *Corvées*, which fell only upon the villages lying in the route of the troops, and their supplies, were a real injustice; and like the *Corvées* of the high roads, employed the labour and the property of men against their consent, and added humiliation and slavery to the burthen of taxation. These *Corvées*, like the others, were therefore now replaced by a general contribution †.

\* See with regard to this principle the last part of this work.

† These compulsory labours received indeed a certain pay, but which for the most part fell greatly short of the loss sustained by those who were obliged to submit to them.

The

The tax called the *taille* is levied directly upon men, who, having nothing but their wages for their subsistence, without property, and without furniture beyond the necessary utensils, cannot even by violence itself be compelled to pay. Every collector (who was himself constrained to undertake the task of levying the tax) had a right to call upon the *four persons in the district, whose proportion of the taille was the greatest*, to fill up all deficiencies. Though they might already have discharged their own share of the tax, they were compelled by the sale of their effects, or even by imprisonment, to expiate the negligence of the collector or the poverty of their countrymen.

It is difficult to conceive a more oppressive regulation; and one of the first cares of M. Turgot was to abolish it. His new law provided at least for the security of every citizen who had paid his share of the tax. The sum which formerly he was obliged to advance, and  
which



which was afterwards distributed upon the community in general, now fell immediately upon the community; the collector being obliged to advance the money for which he was afterwards paid interest.

The proprietors of woods in one of the districts of *Franche Comté*, were subjected to a singular kind of slavery. They were not only obliged to supply the manufacturers of saltpetre with all the wood they wanted at a low price; but they were also prohibited from selling it to any persons, except to the farmers-general for the use of the salt works. This contradiction had subsisted for a long time, and individuals as well as communities had been prosecuted for having violated one or other of these laws, which could not both be obeyed at one and the same time. The first was abolished by an operation in the farm of gun-powder, which I shall presently have occasion to describe; and M. Turgot destroyed the privilege of the farmers-

mers-general, by removing their manufactures into the midst of a forest belonging to the king, to which the waters of the salt springs were conducted by a new canal.

May I be permitted in this place to mention a circumstance very fit to console persons in office, who have the misfortune to be more sensible to popular opinion, than to the testimony of their consciences ? This canal had taken a few acres of land from a gentleman of the province ; a compensation was offered him to be ascertained by surveyors ; this he refused, and came to complain to the court of the violation committed upon his property. The courtiers, on whom M. Turgot had not lavished the substance of the people, repeated the clamour with satisfaction ; (those very courtiers who, when the spacious roads which led to their estates had swallowed up the petty property of the poor, imagined themselves dispensed from paying any indemnification,

demnification, and stifled the cries of the injured. In the very midst of their attacks however the minister, the friend of the nation, had by a law limited the breadth of the high roads, which a false idea of luxury, and the puerile vanity of the conductors, had extended, at the expence of the property of the subject, and the subsistence of the nation.

The little country of Gex, which is separated from the rest of France by Mount Jura, had been subjected to the duties of the *Farm General*. The position of this country between mountains on one side, and an open frontier on the other, made it impossible to collect the duties under this farm, without such a multiplicity of officers as utterly ruined this unhappy district, which was already depopulated by the consequences of the edict of Nantes. M. de Voltaire, whose active and beneficent old age was the honour and consolation of this unfortunate country, had frequently applied to admi-

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nistration



nistraton for liberty to redeem these duties by the substitution of some other tax. His entreaties could only reach the heart of M. Turgot; and the country of Gex at length obtained the privilege so long desired.

We see in all these laws that M. Turgot knew how to attack every species of oppression, and to promote the happiness of every class of subjects, land owners, peasants, and people of the towns, without ever sacrificing the one to the other; always equitable to all, always guided by that spirit of universal justice, which is the principle of every useful and enlightened administration. How grateful must it have been to a mind like his to have effected such invaluable benefits, without employing any other means than that of restoring men to a part of those natural rights, which no constitution can legitimately destroy, which it is the interest of no sovereign to violate, and which (thanks to antient prejudices, and the modern sophistry

phistry of the pretended friends of the people) no country at that period enjoyed to so great an extent as the French! For America had not then recovered her liberty.

It will perhaps be asked, what remains of these laws of M. Turgot? Too little it must be confessed; but we are at least able to discover some relics of them, like the remains of those antient palaces which time and hostile violence have not been able completely to destroy, and whose ruins still afford to a few wretches an asylum. The artist admires them in silence: he perceives his ideas expanded, and cannot but feel an involuntary wish that he may one day be called to erect a monument which may equal them.

During this period other objects, less intimately connected with the public happiness, were not neglected. The number of ports permitted to trade directly to the West India islands was increased; a

liberty advantageous both to the mother country and to the colonies.

A free vent was permitted to the oil of poppies. This oil, which has no detrimental quality, was sold under the name of oil of olives; and M. Turgot was not ignorant that frauds of this kind are always practised, to the detriment alike of the proprietor of the commodity and of the consumer.

Liberty was restored to the glass manufactories of Normandy, which being till then obliged to furnish at a low price a certain quantity of glass to the towns of Paris and Rouen, had had no incentive to improve their fabrics; and remained in that state of mediocrity to which oppressive laws condemn manufactures, which have the misfortune to be subject to their influence.

A few years before, the improvement of waste land had been encouraged by an exemption for a certain time from the payment of tythes. This law was necessary;



cessary; for as tythes are paid not out of the net produce of the lands, but out of their gross produce; not out of the share of the landholder, but out of the labour and sweat of the husbandman; they would have swept away almost the entire profit of the cultivation, and have proved an insurmountable obstacle to the progress of agriculture. But this beneficent exemption had been eluded. The suit which the proprietor of the tythes might institute, under pretence that the land had formerly been cultivated, or might have served for the agistment of cattle, was an evil still greater than the tythe itself; and a new law was necessary to rescue the people from priestly avidity. The term for asserting their claims was limited to six months, from the declaration made of his intentions by the cultivator. Thus the proprietors of tythes could no longer hope to derive profit from the labours of others; and though, out of respect for established usage, the means of oppression

were left them, all motives for exerting those means were removed.

The collection of edicts published under this administration, exhibited almost every day beneficent operations ; and we see that none of the petty vexations to which the people were exposed, escaped the vigilance of the minister,—who only failed to apply the remedy from not having the power, or from the vexations themselves being joined to some more fatal abuse, which could not and ought not to be destroyed but by one common stroke.

There was only one method, in the opinion of M. Turgot, for giving to the internal commerce of the kingdom the activity which is necessary to the encouragement of agriculture and industry, and for placing, by a more extended circulation, the subsistence of the people, and the success of manufactures, more out of the reach of accidents. This was the adoption of a general plan of internal navigation,

tion, and a series of works for rendering navigable those rivers that are capable of it, and improving the navigation of the great rivers. But circumstances did not allow him to engage in any very considerable enterprizes. He set apart a fund of 800,000 livres [£.33,333], and endeavoured to form a general plan, which can alone give to works of this kind an extensive and lasting utility. He knew how easy it is to form projects, and to announce new resources. Not a day passes in which the minister does not receive proposals, worthy of the antient Romans, and the execution of which would immortalize his administration. Not a day passes without its being proved to him, that the prosperity of the state requires that nature should be counteracted, in order to carry a canal under the walls of a city, or through the midst of the estates of a nobleman. But if it becomes a question to examine these projects, and to decide upon them by certain princi-



ples, doubt is the result with men of science, and confidence with men of art. M. Turgot therefore thought himself obliged to connect with his administration three geométricians of the academy of sciences \*, whom he commissioned to examine these projects, and, above all, to furnish him with the materials necessary to enable him to form his judgment. Certain experiments upon the nature of fluids, made by the Abbé Bossut, were the only fruits of this establishment, which, formed upon friendship and personal confidence, ceased with the administration of M. Turgot.

He was not afraid to consult men of science, because he was not afraid of truth. The reproaches that are cast on them, of despising practical knowledge, of looking with a jealous eye upon new inventions in art, and of maintaining the

\* Messrs. d'Alembert, l'Abbé Bossut, and M. de Condorcet.

opinions of the particular societies with which they live, were, in his judgment (a judgment which he had improved by study and experience) the mere recriminations of impostors, enraged that any class of men should dare to exempt itself from their illusions. But he knew at the same time that the learned, accustomed to system and demonstration, carried sometimes to excess the spirit of scepticism and uncertainty; and that in consulting them, it is necessary both to seek to understand, and to be capable of understanding them; lest their diffidence should be misinterpreted into a condemnation, or, which is still more dangerous, into a genuine approbation. The science of another may assist our knowledge, but can never supply the want of it; for it is impossible to judge rightly through another of that which we cannot judge of by ourselves.

The

The right of establishing *public carriages* upon the high roads, had been in France the source of a multitude of petty privileges and exclusions, conceded or confirmed by government. To this had been added, almost every where, an exclusive right of conveying parcels weighing less than fifty pounds. M. Turgot could have wished to annihilate these privileges ; but he must have sacrificed a necessary branch of revenue ; and it was to be feared that the establishment of public carriages without privileges would be a measure of tardy execution in a country, where the habit of obtaining privileges, and of seeing commerce scarcely ever free, exaggerated the fear arising from competitors. The consolidation therefore of these privileges, under an administration dependent upon government, seemed a necessary preliminary operation ; and the rather, as government, while



while it preserved the privilege, might execute it with mildness, and suppress at least the vexations which had hitherto attended it. The new plan procured greater dispatch in the carriages, increased their number, and diminished their price. There resulted from it the advantage and accommodation of individuals, real benefits to commerce, and in the mean time it gave some increase to the public revenue.

But M. Turgot had carried his views farther. Bankers, and a considerable number of revenue agents, were no otherwise useful than to remedy the expence and the tediousness of the actual transport of coin. By diminishing the expence, and accelerating this transport, the expence of employing bankers was consequently diminished, and limits prescribed which it could not pass \*. Government,  
able

\* These expences are always below what the secure transport of the same sum would otherwise cost; but they

able to convey in a very short time, and almost without expence, their money from one end of the kingdom to the other, might diminish the number of its agents, or set bounds to their emoluments : so that this new plan liberated it from the most dangerous dependence to which it has been subjected among modern nations, a dependence upon the persons employed about the revenue and upon bankers.

As this useful operation took away privileges from certain families, a cry was excited that the minister was attacking property. But not only a privilege can never be property, nor can government, by the concession of a privilege, lose its imprescriptible right of changing the form of that concession, and of substituting an indemnification ; but no legislative power (not even that which, from being

they are often very much above what the expences of that transport would be, if there existed a safe and regular communication between the great towns,

exercised

exercised by the body of the people, seems to have the most extensive authority) can pretend to the right of making an irrevocable law, and of forming a convention with certain of its members, which it shall never be at liberty to rescind.

It is the same with respect to exclusive privileges, where the concession implies the sacrifice of a part of the natural liberty of the citizens. As necessity alone can authorize the state to demand this sacrifice, she retains the right of dispensing with it the moment the necessity ceases, or when the sacrifice is no longer useful but mischievous; and she cannot owe to the privileged individuals more than an equivalent for the privilege, of which justice requires they should be dispossessed. — Without doubt the public ought to observe with fidelity its engagements of this sort, and not to break them out of levity, or for a trifling object: but this obligation is not indispensable,  
nor



nor a part of the principles of strict justice. It ought to be subordinate to the more essential and more sacred duty of preserving to the citizens the free exercise of their rights; and it belongs to the conscience of the governor to decide, in each individual question, what it is that justice and the public interest require of him.

The establishment of the *Caisse d'Es-compte* originated in a similar motive with that of the regulation of the carriages. A public bank, that discounted bills of exchange at four per cent. must necessarily reduce to the same amount the usual price of discount. The bills it issued, which were not a legal tender, and which were payable on demand, presented another advantage of forming a paper money. The sum of ten millions [£.416,666] lent to government, and redeemable in thirteen years, at the rate of a million a year, offered a security, necessary perhaps  
at

at first to establish its credit. M. Turgot knew all the advantages and all the risks of this sort of paper, with the importance of confining its limits to the sum requisite to the exigencies of commerce; the difficulty of establishing its credit under a monarchy, and of opposing the underhand manœuvres by which it would be attempted to be overturned.—Always constant to his principles, M. Turgot was not willing that the edict establishing this bank should make it exclusive. The *Caisse* differed in no respect from the other banks, but in the notoriety of its proceedings, and the regularity which this notoriety was calculated to give it.

M. Turgot had not time, while in office, to carry his plan into execution. It was taken up by his successor, but with certain variations; and many of the abuses which M. Turgot had foreseen, and would have prevented, are introduced. In the mean time (and nothing can prove more strongly the utility of this bank,

bank, had his plan been pursued) its credit prevails in spite of its imperfections, and in spite of the manœuvres which influence of every kind has employed to pervert and to overthrow it.

M. Turgot regarded the *encouragement of the arts and sciences* as an indispensable duty of his office. But he did not forget that these encouragements, paid out of the public treasury, ought to be proportioned to the advantage derived from them to the nation who supplied the fund. He considered that they were to succour and support, not to enrich talents: riches might be the reward of industry, fame alone was the recompence of talents. He did not wish that the encouragement given to arts, from the motive of public utility, should abridge the liberty of the citizens, and stifle industry and emulation. He never therefore bestowed a patent.— The rewards that he proposed to give, were a present, a pension, or the purchase  
of



of a certain number of new-invented machines, the distribution of which would at the same time be a benefit conferred by government ; but no medals or other subaltern honours, with which empiricism seeks to reward vanity. His object was to encourage, not to corrupt ; and he believed that in all his transactions it was the business of a statesman to reform mankind, and not to confirm their faults, even though he could have had the hope of applying them usefully.

M. Turgot had formed a plan of substituting *one direct tax*, instead of that multiplicity of indirect taxes of every kind, which are the scourge of industry and of commerce, and the prime source of the misery and poverty of the people. But as some period must elapse before he could begin to realize this scheme (the execution of which would not appear easy on the one hand, or impossible on the other, but to the thoughtless and superficial)

ficial) and before government could relieve the people of a part of their burthens ; other operations, more urgent and less difficult, were not to be neglected.

It is well known how greatly the commerce of France is restricted by *tolls and market duties*, the remains of feudal anarchy, which, distinguished by a variety of barbarous names, divert commerce from its natural channel, increase the price of necessaries, occasion a superfluity in one province, and a scarcity in the next. In 1771, instead of abolishing these duties, an addition was made of thirty-three per cent. to belong to the king. This addition was suppressed by M. Turgot.

*The duties upon different articles brought into Paris* were managed by the city, who had compounded for them, and had been contented with raising a sum sufficient to reimburse itself ; but a company  
obtained

obtained a lease of them towards the close of the last reign. It took possession in 1775; and the people were astonished to experience an additional burthen under a beneficent and popular administration. The cries of the citizens informed M. Turgot of the grievance, who was then attacked with the gout; and, in the midst of his pain, he employed himself to repair the disorder, by the annihilation of the company, whom he indemnified.

*Duties upon sales, leases, transfers, and engagements* between subjects, have a flow, but fatal effect upon agriculture and the public welfare. These duties, by stagnating property, were calculated to prevent the division or the improvement of it. They had introduced expensive forms; these forms were attempted to be evaded; and the security of property was shaken. The mode of levying these taxes was complicated, frequently capricious; and produced ruinous law-suits and exactions, against



which it was too expensive to appeal, merely for a chance of obtaining justice.

M. Turgot not being able to abolish these duties, which were become a necessary part of the public revenue, destroyed at least those which, destitute almost of any real profit, were even useless to the treasury.

*An administration of mortgaged funds* had been established upon terms, the singularity of which made it incumbent in a just minister to break the engagement. M. Turgot discharged his duty, and a new company was employed in the same administration, upon terms that were no longer burthensome.

The *royal demesnes* had been leased for a term of thirty years; and in this lease was included the power of taking possession of the waste lands, or lands that were considered as such, though usurped and cultivated by individuals; together

ther with a power of recovering alienated lands, or, which was equivalent, of making the possessors repurchase their titles. If the conditions of this lease were disadvantageous for government, they were in a still greater degree alarming to the subject. However just might be the claim of the king to these usurped lands and alienated estates, the exercise of this right ought not to be entrusted but to his paternal care, nor directed to any views but those of public utility. This lease was made void, and a board of commission substituted in its place, more advantageous to the revenue, and from the avidity of which the citizens had nothing to fear, at least under a just and enlightened minister.

The privilege of making *powder*, and *the sale of saltpetre*, had been also leased to a company. The profits arising to government were reduced almost to nothing, in consequence of the many petty concessions

exacted upon different pretexts. Government had successively granted to the manufacturers, first the power of obliging persons to permit them to take the salt-petre attached to the walls of their stalls and stables, and afterwards to demand of the communities a lodging for themselves, and a workshop for their manufacture. In some provinces there was even added the privilege of taking at a low price, in the forests of individuals or of the communities, the wood that they thought proper for their operations. The natural consequence of these regulations, was an eager desire in the individuals and the communities to purchase their freedom from the vexations of these men, who were more intent upon amassing the fruits of the fear they inspired, than upon collecting or manufacturing salt-petre.

The art of making nitre was still in its infancy in France, while in neighbouring nations it had made a rapid progress; and the only advantage that could furnish a  
pretext



pretext for the establishment of a monopoly, that of securing to the nation, independent of foreign commerce, the quantity of powder requisite for its defence, had been lost by the very means that were thought necessary for obtaining it. This monopoly was then annulled; and an office instituted in its place, that undertook to reimburse those who had farmed it; that increased the price of saltpetre to the manufacturers, without increasing it to the public; and that destroyed, from a given time\*, fixed at the moment of its establishment, all vexations inimical to the liberty of the people and the property of individuals. The art of making nitre artificially thus established in France, saltpetre increased with astonishing rapidity; and in a short time a million of livres revenue added, and a multitude of vexations taken away, were the consequences of

\* January 1, 1778.—This provision was not attended to.

this measure, and of the care which M. Turgot took to place an enlightened chemist at the head of the plan, and to encourage, by the establishment of premiums, natural philosophers to devote their study to the nature and the production of saltpetre.

The duties upon liquors furnish in France a considerable part of the public revenue. Many other commodities in a liquid form are subject to taxes;—and the method of *gauging vessels* is consequently an important object both to administration and the people.

Kepler, whose discovery of the laws of motion of the planets has immortalized his name, had turned his attention to this subject, and reduced it to geometrical calculation. But an imperfect method is still practised in France; which is liable to errors that are of consequence to commerce, and which is  
still

still worse, is dependent upon capricious calculations.

It is easy to see that this caprice is calculated to increase the duties ; and as the individual aggrieved cannot prove the grievance but by actually measuring the liquor contained in the vessel, he will never have recourse to this method, as it would expose him to the loss of a part of his commodity, and to the injury of the whole of it.

A method, approved by the academy of sciences, was proposed, which was simple in practice, exact in its result, and capable, in case of complaint, of precise proof. It had one defect only ; it made the contents of a vessel a little more than the real quantity ; but at the same time every thing arbitrary was proscribed.

M. Turgot was desirous of establishing this method ; but he experienced the strongest opposition from those very persons whose legal profit would have been augmented by the innovation : and from  
this



this alone we may judge of the justice of this opposition, which in the mean time found protectors. Experiments were made to prove the truth of a proposition geometrically demonstrated, which were indeed known to confirm this demonstration; but they were calculated to consume time; and thus was M. Turgot deprived of the means of destroying one more abuse.

They who pretend that, if the important truths of political œconomy, discovered or illustrated in modern times, are not admitted by the public in general, the fault lies in their not being established upon proofs sufficiently convincing; may learn from this instance, that even geometrical demonstrations may be liable to objections, when they are judged of without being understood, and are opposed from interest.

By edicts already prepared, and upon the point of being issued, the taxes upon  
iron

iron and leather (which were burthensome to commerce, and the last of which had nearly annihilated the tan-pits in France) were to be changed to a more simple tax, or commuted for a land-tax \*. Other reforms,

\* An edict, which the council had approved, went to abolish the *droit d'Aubaine*, which had long been respected as one of the most antient customs of the monarchy, though in reality one of the most antient proofs of the barbarism of our ancestors. This right had been set aside with respect to many nations by particular treaties; as if this reform could not be advantageous except where it was reciprocal. But M. Turgot believed, on the contrary, that it would be beneficial to government to remove the restrictions imposed upon foreigners, even though prejudice should continue them with respect to citizens, and that the greatest advantage would follow to that nation whose liberty was the most complete.

Finally, he hoped to obtain, from the goodness and justice of the king, the suppression of lotteries; an impost, voluntary indeed, but corrupt, and far removed at that time from being the source of those scandals, misfortunes, and crimes, which we have since witnessed. But M. Turgot foresaw the fatal effects that might naturally be expected from it, when, from being abandoned

reforms, more difficult and equally important, were reserved to a future period.

In a state of finance that is very complicated, a multiplicity of contests must take place between the treasury and the persons taxed, in which the latter must necessarily have a double disadvantage.— In the first place, they cannot understand the laws by which the contests are to be decided. The decision is in no case made by any one law, but by a series of laws and precedents, that are considered as an interpretation or supplement to the original laws; all which modify and contradict each other, and become unintelligible from

to the perfidious industry of men bred in the tricks of stock-jobbing, it should add to the deceitful lure which it held out to the avidity of the populace, the facility of a public fund, that was ready to devour as well the subsistence of families, as the wages of debauchery, treachery, and robbery, and, in short, all that a corrupt people, agitated with rage for making fortunes, could exchange for a deceitful hope that must necessarily complete their destruction.

the



the very circumstance of these explanations.

The expence necessary to obtain redress, prevents the persons taxed from appealing, in all cases where the grievance is not very much above this expence; whereas to the revenue-agents this expence is scarcely any thing, especially when we consider the immense profits they derive from these extensions of their power.— But this was not all. It was established as a principle of finance, that in all doubtful cases the decision should be in favour of the revenue; and as by the complication of laws almost every case was doubtful, a successful contest against the revenue was a rare phenomenon. If the persons taxed sometimes obtained justice from an intendant, the financiers appealed to the minister; and the necessity of incurring an additional expence was the only advantage the citizens could derive from the equitable decision of these magistrates.

M. Turgot

M. Turgot adopted a very different principle. He felt that justice demanded a decision against the treasury in every doubtful case, and also in all those cases where a particular precedent or a secret and surreptitious law was opposed to general and public laws. He abolished the unjust privilege which the financiers had obtained, suspending by an appeal the restitution of what they had illegally taken, in defiance of the order of the lower court; a privilege that rendered justice absolutely null to those who were destitute of money and protection. It was therefore pleasantly observed by a financier, that M. Turgot was a mortal enemy to the receipt. In the mean time this spirit of justice and humanity, far from injuring the receipt, tended to increase it, in spite of the suppression of some taxes, and a diminution of the rate of others. This increase could spring from no other cause than that of circulation, commerce, and consumption; and evidently proved

the happy effect of this spirit upon the welfare of the people.

In a nation where the public debt is very great, and where considerable sums in bills, payable at sight upon the public treasury, are circulated in commerce, the credit of government has necessarily great influence upon credit in general. Without the credit of government, that of every individual, in any respect connected with the royal treasury, is precarious, and that of almost every other becomes suspicious. The circulation of these bills is then no longer serviceable to commerce. The high interest which they bear from the reduction of their value, together with the advantageous terms occurring in public loans and in private contracts with those depending upon government, cannot fail to increase the interest of money in general; an increase fatal to industry and to commerce. In fine, all the operations of a  
government



government destitute of credit are attended with uncertainty and ruin.

On the contrary, if public credit be re-established, and new loans made at a lower interest; the reform of abuses, the re-establishment of order, the discharge of disadvantageous debts, and the abolition of contracts detrimental to the nation and oppressive to the people, would all become easy. M. Turgot felt the importance of redeeming the national credit, which was almost annihilated; and he knew but one way, that of being exact in payments, faithful to engagements, and of observing a spirit of justice in all laws.

The payment of pensions had been stopped for three years: M. Turgot paid an arrear of two years upon such as did not exceed 400 livres [ $\pounds$ .16. 13s. 4d.]; that is, upon all those which, furnishing mere subsistence, had been given as a just reward, or at least as real charity; and in  
the

the course of his administration, the payment of these became regular. The payment of the others, and of the arrears of interest due to the public creditors, were accelerated as much as possible.

In consequence of the liquidation that took place in 1764, many persons had forfeited their claims by negligence, or from the difficulty of understanding and executing the complicated forms that had been prescribed. M. Turgot restored their claims, simplified the requisite forms, and gave six months for complying with them. At the same time he perceived that the expences and necessary forms, would reduce almost to nothing inconsiderable sums; he therefore redeemed such interests as were below twelve livres\*.

Ten millions of livres in bills of exchange, advanced to the West Indian colonies, had been due five years, and the

\* This operation, after some delays, was completed in 1784.

payment suspended. M. Turgot immediately paid off fifteen hundred thousand livres, set apart a million a year for the payment of the remainder, and offered to such proprietors of these bills as should prefer it, to fund them at four per cent.

While, on the one hand, M. Turgot diminished the national debt that was due, or made redemptions that were useful to the poorer class of citizens; on the other hand, he diminished anticipations of the revenue, another source of the decline of public credit.

The national credit speedily recovered: the funds approached their natural standard, and some were at par.—M. Turgot authorized the states of the provinces, and other bodies of men, to borrow sums at four per cent. to enable them to redeem capitals bearing an higher interest; but at the same time he required them to provide funds for their gradual redemption; a precaution necessary to their credit.

Private loans, as well as those made to the royal treasury, or furnished in the undertakings



undertakings of finance, were already negotiated upon easier terms, and there was a certainty of their being still lower.—Finally, M. Turgot had secured a loan in Holland of sixty millions at an interest of less than five per cent. This would have been a singular phenomenon in the finances of France, but his resignation prevented its taking place; and the first loan which followed it, though of much less amount, and having the advantage of a small lottery, which, though not altogether a new practice, was still seducing, exceeded the rate of six and a quarter.

The offices of finance had been considerably increased, with the sole view of raising a temporary sum by their sale. Almost every office was double; and each board of receivers equally increased, had its treasurers and comptrollers. M. Turgot proposed to unite these double offices under one person, who should allow an indemnification to the reduced officer; and to suppress the salary of the

remaining person, who, from the union of the perquisites of each office, would still be sufficiently paid. This regulation had taken place in the receipt of the *taille*. A similar regulation of the Paris duties had equally produced a diminution of useless expences.

Many other reforms were prepared; and the loans which M. Turgot proposed to raise, while they facilitated considerable redemptions, would have been the source of a still greater œconomy. His plan of a loan at four per cent. always open, and which should claim the public confidence by a facility in its transfers, and a provision for reimbursement, might have supplied the means of liquidating all debts that bore a higher interest; and consequently of diminishing the interest on the public debt more than a fourth part, as well as of establishing, by the total suppression of the offices of finance, a simple mode of accounting at little expence.

Such

Such were the operations and such the views of M. Turgot; and it was thus, while he was accused of ignorance in finance (by those who apparently wished to derive consolation from it, for the superiority they were compelled to acknowledge in him in the higher branches of administration) that he increased the public revenue, without imposing a new tax, notwithstanding he had suppressed or lessened many of the old taxes; and that, without recourse to new loans, he had paid off some debts and diminished others, and had checked anticipations of the revenue, and rendered the public payments more prompt.

All these labours were the work only of twenty months; and two attacks of the gout, a disorder hereditary in his family, had, during a number of months of this period, interrupted his attention to the arrangement and execution of his plans. The forced application, that his



zeal for the public welfare led him to bestow, at the risk of his life, prolonged these attacks, and rendered them dangerous.

Two extraordinary events had also opposed themselves to his activity. A pestilential distemper had spread itself among the cattle in Guyenne and the neighbouring provinces, where the lands are worked with oxen. Very few escaped infection, and almost all died that were attacked. The calamity demanded the most efficacious succours, conducted upon a regular plan.

M. Turgot, understanding from the persons who were best informed, that there was no known remedy, or effectual preservative, found it necessary to confine all his thoughts to prevent the communication and shorten the duration of the evil: a line of troops was ordered to surround the infected provinces; and skilful physicians (and especially M. Vicq d'Azir, à young

a young man, but whose merit M. Turgot had discovered, and whose present reputation justifies the choice) were commissioned to preside in the execution of the proposed plan. Wherever the infection could not be stopped with certainty, they had orders to kill even the sound beasts; government paying a third of the loss. This execution was rigorous, but it was proved that the proprietors of the cattle would gain by it considerably, since the number of those that escaped or survived the distemper, was far from amounting in the infected cantons to a third of the whole. Rigorous precautions, founded upon the best observations, were adopted to purify the stalls and destroy the last remains of the contagion. In the meantime experiments were made for the discovery either of a remedy or a preservative. Care was taken to secure to the proprietors the sale of the hides and the carcases of the sound cattle, without giving room for the inconveniences that

M 4 would

would naturally result from the sale of the others. Premiums were given to those who brought horses into the provinces, which, fortunately, were not liable to the distemper: they were bought by government, and distributed to the poorer citizens. In no instance of calamity had the authority of government ever opposed so extraordinary an activity, a plan of precautions better combined, or succours more extensive or better applied.

M. Turgot felt, from this calamity, the importance of an established medical society, which should be commissioned to apply succours to the people in instances of contagions among the cattle, as well as among the human species; to inform administration in all cases where political operations may affect the health and the lives of the people; and where their preservation may require the assistance, the care, and the power of government. It was to be a further object of this society to cultivate physic, particularly with a view  
of



of converting it into a true science, or rather into an art directed by the principles of sound philosophy, and confirmed by practical knowledge.— But in forming this establishment, which did not receive its last sanction till after his dismissal, M. Turgot was faithful to his principles. Though well satisfied that it would be of lasting utility, he did not give to this institution any of those forms which continue the existence of an establishment after it has ceased to be useful, which perpetuate the errors that the author of it is subject to at the time of its formation, and which prevent the removal of abuses that time never fails to bring in its train, and those improvements which the change of opinions, and the progress of knowledge, may render indispensable. In this corporate establishment (the only one he ever projected) he strictly conformed himself to the truths which he had published twenty years before, under the article of *Foundation*, in the *Encyclopédie*. A  
striking

striking instance of the uniformity of his principles, and of that close connection between his sentiments and his conduct, which was the strongest feature of his character, and of which no statesman had as yet given an example.

Scarcely had the danger of this distemper ceased, scarcely had the minister, who, in the midst of the tortures of the gout, had employed many nights in composing regulations and minute instructions for the persons employed in the execution of his plan, recovered from this fatigue, when a new event required all his activity and all his courage.

He had only opened the commerce of corn within the kingdom, and it is difficult to suppose, that this restriction could occasion a famine : indeed no one dared to advance it directly. But a pretext was wanted to attack the minister ; and this law furnished it.

The

The season had been bad; the people had been accustomed, in times of scarcity, to give themselves up to violent proceedings against the corn factors, whom the government had often weakly abandoned to its fury; and riots were excited in one or two of the towns of Burgundy, which a little firmness had quickly dissipated.—But a heavier storm was collecting on the part of the capital. Pamphlets, written to inform those who were alarmed at the virtue of the minister, to direct their clamours against this part of his administration, were distributed with profusion. M. Turgot, and those who were of the same sentiments, were there described as men employed in wild systems, who wished to govern from the recesses of the *closet* upon speculative principles, and who sacrificed the people to the experiments which they were desirous of making to ascertain the truth of their system. Soon afterwards a set of robbers, crying that they wanted bread,  
and



and purchasing, at as low a price as they pleased, the corn which they afterwards sold again, and exciting the people by spreading false printed *arrêts* of council, drew after them the populace of the villages, and plundered successively all the markets upon the rivers of the Lower Seine and Oyse. They entered Paris, rifled some bakers shops, and endeavoured to raise the people, whom they only frightened. They appeared at Versailles, and they had merely the honour of terrifying a few courtiers.—M. Turgot saw in the circumstances of this commotion a plan to starve the capital. The silver, and even gold, with which the plunderers were provided, their mode of destroying provisions while they declared themselves dying with hunger, and the right which they assumed of fixing the assize of provisions, all announced to him a regular system of rebellion and plunder; and proved the necessity of opposing an effectual remedy to check the evil, to save Paris, and perhaps the

the kingdom. All the powers of government seemed suspended. M. Turgot only acted. Virtue and genius had obtained in this moment of crisis the ascendancy they necessarily possess when they have an opportunity of displaying all their energy.—Troops were dispersed along the Seine, the Oyse, the Marne, and the Aîne: every where they anticipated or dispersed the pillagers; and the tumult ended in the frontiers of the isle of France and of Picardy.—The lieutenant of police of Paris, and the comptroller of the watch, who had manifested a weakness and inaction which circumstances like these might have rendered fatal, were dismissed from office. The parliament terrified, had published an *arrêt*, which, while it prohibited the assembling of the people, promised that the king should be petitioned for a reduction of the price of bread. This *arrêt* was pasted up on the day of the riots in the dusk of the evening: and it might have renewed the tumult

mult the next day, and rendered it dangerous. M. Turgot during the night ran to Versailles, awakened the king and his ministers, proposed his plan, and fixed their consent to it. Proclamations were pasted over the arrêt, which forbad, in the king's name, the assembling of the people under pain of death. The parliament, summoned in the morning to Versailles, was informed in a bed of justice that the king annulled its *arrêt*, empowered the prévôts of the *Marchauffées* to try the rioters, and forgave, in consideration of the circumstances, a step which might have had fatal consequences.

From this moment tranquillity was restored. The dispersed rioters, almost always anticipated, were soon quelled and quickly disappeared. A few victims were sacrificed to the public peace. The people seeing, for the first time, the government inaccessible to fear, pursuing its principles with steadiness, carefully attending



tending to the preservation of provisions and the security of merchants, displaying all its activity and all its power against sedition, and while it was prodigal of useful succours, refusing to prejudices and popular opinions every sacrifice contrary to justice; their confidence soon took place of inquietude and murmurs.

A month after, the king, in his way to Rheims, passed through a part of the seat of these riots, and saw nothing but a people who blessed his government. There had been a design of compelling him to sacrifice his minister to the fear of popular commotions; but this sentence from the king, repeated with transport by the grateful nation, “ *It is M. Turgot and I only that love the people,*” was the reward of the minister, and the punishment of his enemies.

The personal conduct of M. Turgot had been strictly conformable to his principles. He had dismissed from his office  
all

all those subordinate persons whom a report, too general to be unfounded, had marked as unworthy of his confidence \*. He had abolished a commerce in grain made in the name of government, and for that very reason justly odious to the people. In entering into his office he had diminished the appointments of it a fourth part, and had asked nothing for the expences of his own establishment. Under his administration none were permitted to share in any thing to which they had not contributed, and pensions upon places were strictly proscribed. Many gifts extorted from the towns were restored. The deputies of a certain town, in giving him an account of their administration, spoke to him of some emoluments which had

\* M. Turgot was persuaded that a suspicion, well founded, was a sufficient reason for withdrawing confidence and dismissing a person from office ; but not sufficient to deprive him of an indemnification, or such recompence as his services and labour might have merited.

formerly

formerly been sold at a price, that from their subsequent increase had become much below their real value. The minister replied, "that the difference should be made up."—"But, Sir, a part of these emoluments now belong to yourself."—"The necessity is so much the stronger."

A merchant, by one of those worn-out compliments which are no longer flattering to ministers, proposed to give the name of Turgot to a vessel intended for the negro trade. With the indignation of a virtuous mind, that could not be familiarized to a crime from the habit of seeing it committed, M. Turgot rejected the offer; and he was not afraid by this refusal of declaring publicly his opinion, at the risk of exciting against him all those, who considered the promotion of their fortune as connected with the continuation of this infamous traffic.

Every person who cultivated science,  
literature, or the arts, who had talents,  
N and



and made a right use of them, was treated with distinction. They were sure to be listened to, and cordially received, if they had any thing to propose that might contribute to the public welfare.

He was not satisfied with merely proposing to the king the laws that he thought were the best, and of permitting, as far as was in his power, a free discussion of the objects of administration and finance; he set the useful example of laying before the public a minute and explanatory account of the *principles* by which the laws had been framed, and the motives which had determined their provisions.

The preamble to the *arrêt* which established the freedom of the commerce of corn, and the preamble to the edicts which abolished the *Corvées*, destroyed certain corporate rights, and annulled the privileges restricting the commerce of wine, are *chef-d'œuvres* in a line, of which there was yet no model. The great and simple mind of M. Turgot, governed by

deep sentiments of love for the people, and of zeal for justice, and almost inaccessible to any other passion, naturally assumed the noble and paternal air that so well accords with a monarch exposing to the eyes of his subjects whatever was intended for their happiness. It was not the austere majesty of an emperor giving laws to the universe in the name of a conquering people; it was the modest dignity of a father who renders an account to his children of the designs he had formed in their favour, who enlightens their minds upon the motives of the obedience he requires, and who is less desirous of commanding, than of consoling and instructing them.

In such compositions as these, it is apparent that any praise bestowed upon the king, or upon the minister under the name of the king, would be unbecoming both to the one and the other; and that all pretensions to wit, to the beauties of style, and to sublime ideas, would be mis-

placed. The more a man is exalted either by rank, by power, or by genius, the more these little weaknesses of pride humble and degrade him. The business is to enlighten the people, and not to soothe them by flattering their opinions and prejudices, or that vague desire of amending their condition, which leads them to embrace so many chimeras. If a policy like this may be pardoned in a minister who is desirous of retaining his place, it never can be suitable for a king; and it is to betray at once the king and his subjects to employ it when speaking under his name.

This practice, consecrated by the example of M. Turgot, doubtless requires in a minister either great talents or a great character; yet it is one of the surest means of creating in a monarchy that public spirit, that turn for engaging in public affairs, which has falsely been considered as an advantage peculiar to republican



lican governments, and which is certainly one of the greatest it can enjoy.

M. Turgot was not so absorbed by the immense labours of his office, as not to have some moments to bestow on objects that appeared to him important to the public welfare. When the *coronation* of the king was to take place, he proposed to have the ceremony performed at Paris. He saw in it the advantage of considerable œconomy; and another advantage not less considerable, of destroying the prejudice that destined this ceremony to the town of Rheims, and caused an oil to be made use of which was considered as miraculous (though from a fable rejected by all critics), and connected with it a false opinion of virtues not less fabulous, and which might contribute to make a ceremony be regarded as necessary, that added nothing to the rights of the sovereign. In a time of tranquillity these prejudices are of little moment; but in a

time of commotion their consequences may be terrible ; and prudence requires that they should be attacked before they have arrived at this dangerous crisis.

M. Turgot proposed at the same time to alter the form of the *coronation oath*. It promised, he thought, too much to the clergy and too little to the nation. It made the king swear to exterminate heretics ; an oath which he could not observe without committing the crime of violating the rights of conscience, and the laws of reason and humanity ; an oath which Louis XIII. and Louis XIV. had been obliged to evade by publishing in a declaration that they did not consider the oath as including *Protestants*, who yet were the only heretics in the kingdom. M. Turgot thought that a public and solemn promise ought not to be a vain ceremony, and that when a king, who upon earth has nothing above him, makes in the face of heaven an engagement with  
his

his subjects, he ought not to swear to perform any but real and important duties \*.

These ideas were not carried into execution ; but M. Turgot thought himself obliged to draw up a memoir to explain to the king his principles of toleration, and to prove, that a sovereign, convinced that the established religion is the only true religion, ought to allow to those subjects who might profess a different one, the most entire freedom of sentiment and worship ; that he is obliged to this toleration by the laws of conscience, by strict obligations of justice founded upon natural right, by humanity, and even by policy. M. Turgot finished only

\* For the oath, at once false and cruel, not to pardon duellists, M. Turgot substituted that, of employing all his efforts to destroy the barbarous prejudice that occasioned duels. It will be conceived that the new oath made no mention of blasphemers, a word absolutely void of meaning with men who make use of their reason.



the first part of this memoir ; but this contained what was most important, as it is all upon which men of any sincerity, whose understanding is at all improved, have been able to retain doubts,

M. Turgot proved, that the more a prince believes in the truth of his religion, the more he ought to feel how unjust and tyrannical it would be for himself to be deprived of it ; and the more he ought to know that he is guilty of the same injustice when he interferes with the consciences of those, who, with the same sincerity, are equally persuaded of a contrary religion. He proved that every religion, having been in turn adopted or rejected by honest and enlightened men, who had scrupulously examined it, a belief in any one of these might naturally be the result of a close conviction ; and that it would be absurd to suppose that any religion rested upon such evidence as none but the ill-disposed could reject ; that therefore persecution, even in the cause of truth,  
ceases

ceases to be just, as involuntary error is not a crime, and as even an assent to truth, by those who do not believe in it, is culpable ; that in violating the rights of conscience, we are in danger of making others commit a crime, and by that means of committing one ourselves ; that our personal persuasion can be no reason for disturbing the conscience of others, because it is no proof to them ; that the more we believe religion to be of importance and essential to eternal happiness, the more we ought to respect private conscience in others ; and that therefore it is impossible to be intolerant without being guilty of contradiction, at least if we consider religion as any thing more than a political establishment made to deceive mankind, in order more effectually to govern them.

Such had been the operations, the labours, the views, and the conduct of M. Turgot, when the king demanded his  
resignation,

resignation, which he had himself been unwilling to make, as it belonged neither to his mind nor his genius to believe, that there was any situation in which he could not do good\*.

He had long foreseen this event. The edicts by which he destroyed the *Jurandes* and the *Corvées*, had not been registered but in a bed of justice, and not till after remonstrances almost as warm as those which the very same bodies had made against these very grievances. All his operations created a murmur; all his projects experienced an opposition†. In

\* He had been informed time enough to prevent his dismissal by a voluntary resignation, nor could he doubt the truth of the information, or the motives of friendship and respect for his virtues which occasioned it to be given.

† To excite the public clamour against any opinion, it was enough that M. Turgot was suspected of espousing it; and all those opinions were attributed to him, which were thought best calculated to render him odious.

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the first moment of his ministry, the public, terrified by the fear of bankruptcy or of additional taxes, had not suspected any danger in a real reform in the state, a danger almost as great to the rich inhabitants of the capital as bankruptcy itself. But their first fears dissipated, the danger was perceived in all its extent. It was impossible not to see upon what principles this new administration would be directed. It announced every where the desire of establishing the citizens in their natural rights, which had been violated by a crowd of laws, multiplied from ignorance and weakness rather than despotism. Every where it discovered the design of attacking abuses at their very source, and of practising no policy but that of conforming itself to truth and justice.

All those aristocratic powers which are of no use in a monarchy but to harass the people and perplex the government, had their destruction or reform implied in the  
course

course of an equitable and firm system of administration.

The courtiers were too well convinced that they had nothing to expect from M. Turgot. They foresaw that if ever he obtained the power of extending his æconomical reform to the expences of the court, he would strike at the root of the evil, and not be contented with lopping off the weaker branches, which others would quickly replace. They foresaw the annihilation of all those places and offices, which, useless to public order, and yet paid by the public, are real vexations. Already allured by the attraction of money, they had come to place the remains of their antient power at the foot of the throne.—But the time is at length arrived when the nation ought no longer either to fear or to pay them; when they have no pretension to govern or to impoverish it.

The financiers knew, that under an enlightened minister, solely intent upon

simplifying and reforming the receipt of taxes, the sources of their enormous wealth would soon be dried up.

The money dealers felt how useless they should become under a minister who was the friend of order, of the liberty of commerce, and of public notoriety in all proceedings.

That crowd of people of all conditions and ranks, who had contracted the unfortunate habit of living at the expence of the public without serving it, who subsisted upon a multiplicity of particular abuses, and considered them as so many rights; all these men, alarmed and terrified, formed a league powerful by its numbers and the strength of their clamours.

As there were no fortunes to be hoped for under a virtuous and enlightened minister, no party attaches itself to such an one. At the commencement of M. Turgot's administration, a considerable number



ber of men of real abilities and knowledge, and others who thought or wished it to be believed that they possessed such, attempted to provide him with a party ; but they retired by degrees, and joined themselves to his enemies.

Literary characters, of whom great account is to be made in all cases where the public opinion has any powerful influence, were to be supposed likely to have attached themselves to a minister zealous for the progress of reason, and publicly professing at court, and even in office, that he loved and cultivated letters. But they soon abandoned a man who respected indeed their productions, but who weighed them also, and estimated their value by their utility, and made this utility the measure of the rewards they merited.

There remained to M. Turgot only the people and some personal friends ; and this was a weak resource for opposing all the parties and bodies that were leagued  
against

against him. Public spirit, and that zeal for the general weal which he had created in France, existed in the several provinces, and was there busy in the execution of useful projects, but it had extended neither to Paris nor the court.

His virtue and courage had merited and obtained for him the esteem of the king; but he possessed not that intimate and personal confidence which can alone support a minister against numerous and powerful parties. They were now destined to triumph and prevent a revolution which, while it promoted the happiness of France, would, by holding up so considerable an example, have contributed to the happiness of every nation.

The time for the enemies of the people was arrived. M. Turgot had done for the public welfare almost all that was possible for a minister to do of himself, and without calling the nation to his aid; and he had prepared new measures  
by

by means of which the nation, at the same time that it would enjoy the immense benefits to be reaped from his labours, would have assisted him in executing others not less important.

## CHAPTER



## C H A P T E R VI.

I SHALL here present the reader with M. Turgot's plan, and shall develop its consequences in all their extent, at least as far as I am capable of entering into them. If any errors should glide into the account that I shall give, it is to me they ought to be imputed: the genius of M. Turgot merits a better interpreter.—I shall not be afraid of rendering the change in question more difficult, by showing how formidable it may appear to the rich and powerful classes of men. It is not by deceiving that we are to serve mankind; it is from the power of truth and reason that they ought to expect happiness, and not from the policy and address of a minister. This illusion also is so transient, and must be obtained by sacrifices so dangerous to the public interest, that if virtue could lend its aid to

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such an hypocrisy, it would still be the part of true policy to proscribe it.

The first important operation that M. Turgot proposed, was the establishment of what he called *Municipalities*. An assembly of representatives cannot be useful, if it is not so formed, that the wishes of the assembly shall in general coincide with the opinion and inclinations of the persons represented; Or if the members which compose it are ignorant of the true interest of the nation; Or, in short, if they are capable of being misled by any other interest, and especially by their own corporate interest.—A corporate interest is more dangerous than even personal interest, because it acts at once upon a greater number of persons; because it is never to be restrained by a principle of shame, or the fear of censure, which has no effect when shared among a number; and because the personal interest of a considerable number of unconnected individuals

viduals can never be contrary to the general interest but in rare and momentary cases.

It was to comply with the three important conditions just mentioned, that M. Turgot had combined the plan of the assemblies that he was about to establish. He began with uniting different *villages* into one community.

The general assembly of the members of this village community was to be composed of landholders only. Those whose property furnished an annual income, amounting to a certain sum, were to have one voice. Small assemblies of the other proprietors, whose collected incomes should amount to the requisite qualification for one voice, were each to elect one representative, to have one voice.—By this means the representation would be much more equal than it had ever been in any country in the world. No citizen, if one may so speak, would have been deprived of his vote but with his own con-

sent; and it is to be observed, that while the right of appearing in this assembly was extended to the landholders only, no member of that class, that it could be useful to summon there, would be excluded. Votes would not be multiplied to an excess, as is the case in those countries where the right of voting is fixed at a very low income; nor would a multitude of citizens be deprived of the privilege, as in countries where it is fixed too high.

These general assemblies for the villages were to have been confined to one function; that of electing a representative of the community in the assembly of the canton; and of appointing a certain number of officers to manage their ordinary affairs, and to watch over the inferior administrations that it would still have been necessary to preserve in every village, though under a new form.

Similar assemblies were to be formed in the *towns* by the proprietors of houses,  
and



and upon the same plan that was to be adopted by the country communities.

An important advantage resulted from this combination.—United into bodies sufficiently numerous, and in which the lords of manors and the clergy could have no vote but as landholders, the country people would have had, as supporters of their rights, persons better informed and more attended to than the simple syndics of the parishes. They would have been able to contend with the town corporations, whose credit had frequently extorted from government regulations ruinous to the country. They would have been able to defend themselves with greater advantage against the usurpations of the nobility and clergy, against the authority of subaltern officers, and the avidity of the retainers of justice, &c. &c.; and we might have expected to find, even at its first establishment, nobles, and ecclesiastics, who should prefer the honour of

being elected by the public voice, as the chiefs and the protectors of their cantons, to the vanity of displaying a few privileges odious to the people, now become the judges of their conduct, and the dispensers of posts which they might ambition.

The municipal assemblies of a *canton* (similar almost to what is called an *election*) were each to appoint deputies, who, at particular times, were to hold an assembly.

Every election or *canton* was to send representatives to a *provincial assembly*; and a deputy from every province was to form a *general assembly at Paris*.

No deputy was to have a seat in these assemblies in right of any office, or as belonging to any particular class: but no class or profession, that did not require residence, was excluded from the right of representing a community, or a province. The nobleman, the prelate, or the magistrate, would have had a seat as a man of  
the

the people, provided the choice of the community, the canton, or the province, had decided it.

The constitution of all these assemblies was to be the same. M. Turgot did not believe that the different characters of a Norman and a Gascon required a different form of government. He considered these political refinements, employed with so much ingenuity to justify old abuses, were only calculated to create new ones.

Equality among the members appeared still more necessary. A deputy for the clergy or for the noblesse, and an ecclesiastic or a noble person deputed by the proprietors of a canton, are not the same characters. In the one case they believe themselves the representatives of their particular order, and obliged in honour to support its prerogatives; in the other, they consider these prerogatives as personal interests, which they are not permitted to defend, unless they accord with the interest of the public. If the



deputies therefore had been divided into different orders, an additional sanction would have been given to the inequality subsisting between them; and the deputies of the lower order of the people, already inferior in credit, would have become still more so by the rank assigned them. The object should be to unite the citizens among themselves, whereas we divide them when we mark with a stronger line the bounds of their separation.—If, from popular motives, the representatives had been increased in proportion to the number of persons represented, a contrary inconvenience would have resulted; namely, the oppression of the superior orders.—Again, if the different orders have a *common* interest, why not surrender the care of it to an assembly in which these orders are blended? And if they have opposite interests, is it from an assembly in which these orders are separated, that we are to expect reasonable decisions and impartial measures?—Besides (should the orders be  
separate)

separate) is it not evident, that whenever an equality of numbers appeared, that it could only be deserters from the lower orders who would eventually decide every thing?—But, in truth, these interests cannot be so opposite as they appear to men misled by prejudices, and actuated by little passions; and a division among the orders would only multiply those prejudices which are inimical to the general interest.

The distinction in France between the inhabitants of the towns and of the country cannot fail of being odious.—The clergy are not a political body, but a profession; and have no more right to form an order, than any other class of citizens paid by the state for exercising a public function in it.—The true nobility, the descendants of the antient *chivalry*, would have no reason to complain of a form in which they would appear as the chiefs and representatives of the people; for it would be bringing them back to their original institution.

institution. Besides, while in such a constitution, the nobles who possessed considerable landed property, would have a sufficiently great preponderance, an honourable career would at the same time be open to the poorer nobility.—Assemblies without distinction of orders, having no interest but that of the nation, could not have a plan of anarchy set on foot among them arising from little separate aristocracies, which would be governed by courtiers whose votes must either be bought or their intrigues suppressed; and who, if they sometimes defended the people against the minister, would oftener oblige the minister to defend the people against them\*.

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\* M. Turgot well knew that the establishment of assemblies with distinct orders and perpetual presidents, &c. would be more easy, and would secure to a minister the support of the heads of the clergy, the courtiers, and the first order of the nobility, who would all be flattered with the importance they would possess, and the obligation the minister would be under of giving



The scheme in question was to have taken place at once in all the districts of the elections. This was the only way to insure its success, as well as of making these assemblies useful from the first moment of their establishment, and enabling them to do good in a dignified and durable manner. The idea of making an attempt in a single province, M. Turgot considered as mere puerility, which would only have rendered the first step more easy, by increasing the difficulty of the second.

ing (as the *grande*s of the court of Lewis XIV. used to say) an account to them of his conduct, as well as with the share they would have in the government; and the way that would be paved for their becoming ministers. He knew that this institution possessed that due mixture of respect for old prejudices so well calculated to reconcile the public to new ones; but he knew at the same time that such an establishment was the most effectual way of creating obstacles truly insurmountable to the reform of abuses, and of changing the constitution of the state without any advantage to the people.

M. Turgot

M. Turgot thought it would be proper to employ these assemblies only in matters of administration, and even there to limit them to the execution of general regulations, and of laws proceeding from the sovereign power. The destruction of complicated and multiplied abuses, the reform of the system of administration, and the new moulding of laws, could not, in his opinion, be made but upon a regular plan, upon a combined and connected system, and ought all to be the work of one man.

He knew, that even in the most popular constitutions, where all the citizens, from duty as well as from ambition, engage in public affairs, every thing was usually decided by the force of prejudice; and that in such constitutions more particularly, abuses are eternal, and beneficial alterations impossible. But in a monarchy, where an establishment of this kind would be a novelty, what was to be expected from an assembly of men, almost

all strangers to public affairs, unpliant to the voice of truth, and ready to be seduced by the first impostor that should make the trial ? The generosity that should pretend to leave to themselves the care of their interests, would be an hypocritical cruelty. It would be to surrender, without the most trifling return, the most important advantage of monarchy ; that of being able to pull down the fabrics of prejudice before they fall to pieces of themselves ; of making beneficial reforms even where a multitude of rich and powerful men protect abuses ; and, lastly, of following a regular system, without being obliged to sacrifice any part of it in the purchase of voters.

M. Turgot had employed his thoughts upon this scheme long before he became a minister. He had studied it as a whole ; he had examined all its parts ; he had settled the course it would be necessary to follow ; and he had determined upon the means of execution. He was desirous  
of



of giving to these establishments, from their first institution, every perfection that the present state of knowledge would permit. He wished to make no sacrifice to the prejudices of the moment, nor to give to these assemblies a corrupt form, in order to obtain a more brilliant glory, or even to facilitate their establishment. He knew that every institution of this kind, if once constructed upon erroneous principles, could never be reformed but by considerable efforts, and at the expence perhaps of the public tranquillity; and he conceived that it was not allowable for a minister, who ought always to prefer the public good to his own glory, to procure a transient benefit by rendering all greater and more durable benefits impossible.— It was with the same views that he was desirous of regulating at once the form of these assemblies, the manner of electing members, the order in which they should sit, the mode of chusing officers, the rights to  
belong

belong to each assembly, the limits of those rights, the functions of the officers, and, in short, all that his penetration and his principles enabled him to embrace. He was desirous that this institution should be the work of reason, and not, like all those that had ever existed, the production of chance and emergency.

He would have begun his plan by the establishment of the smaller municipalities, which were soon to be followed by that of the assemblies of the cantons.— There he would have stopped; since in the first instance this establishment would have been sufficient for the chief part of his designs; and in the next place it would require time for the public spirit to form itself, for the citizens to be instructed, and for those, whose information, talents, and integrity, rendered them worthy of more extensive scenes of action, to prepare and to make themselves known. It is easy to establish assemblies; but their utility depends solely upon the information

of their members, and the spirit that animates them : and in France it was in meditation to give a new education to the whole body of the people ; to create in them new ideas, while at the same time they were called to act in a new sphere. The first class of citizens had in this respect no advantage over the common people, and it was only to be feared that they would be found to possess stronger prejudices. It was necessary therefore to make firm the foundation before the edifice could be constructed. It was necessary, before the citizens elected chiefs, that they should be capacitated for the election.—M. Turgot was influenced by another motive. His policy, founded solely upon justice, forbade him to regard any abuse of confidence as lawful, whatever advantage might result from it, or to think that he might be permitted to deceive the king, even in favour of the whole nation. Animated by this principle, he thought that it would be his duty



duty to stop after he had formed the assemblies of the cantons (which would be too numerous to unite themselves, and too weak to act separately), and then to acquaint the king, that by giving effect to the whole extent of the plan, he would confer upon the nation an eternal benefit; but that in the mean time it would imply the sacrifice of a part of his royal authority. He would have shown him all the glory which such a sacrifice, without example in history, would have merited; an instance of patriotism superior to those virtues which have acquired to Trajan and to Marcus Aurelius the just admiration of all ages, but which (by having their influence confined to a single reign) have been lost for posterity.

He would have pointed out to him at the same time, that, by this constitution, the *general* wish of the nation would be the only obstacle to his power; that this power, always tranquil and secure, would no longer experience any inter-

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mediate

mediate body, nor the interests of any order of men, to trouble the peace, and to interpose between the king and the people; and that it would therefore only become the more independent and the more at liberty to do good: And that this general wish of the people (respecting which, in this case it would be impossible to be deceived, and which would seldom be erroneous) would be a more safe guide than that public opinion (a kind of obstacle common to all absolute governments) whose resistance is less constant, as well as less tranquil, often equally powerful, frequently mischievous, and always dangerous. Lastly, that if, by the natural order of things, such a sacrifice should at one period or other become necessary, it could not happen without danger to the nation as well as to the king, unless it was absolutely voluntary on his part, and made before the time in which its necessity began to be felt.—Let not my readers  
blame

blame me for entering into these details, which servile minds, or minds impassioned for liberty, may consider perhaps as imprudent and misplaced. For why should we not be permitted to exhibit a virtuous man situated between the desire of doing good, and the duty which the confidence of his sovereign imposes; wishing to betray neither the one nor the other of these obligations; or rather acknowledging no obligation, but that of dealing with others with the same sincerity as with himself?

If the plan had been adopted in all its parts, the establishment of the Provincial assemblies was to have taken place as soon as the preparatory assemblies had acquired a competent stability; and were supposed capable of electing with care representatives possessed of sufficient information to act of themselves (instead of confining their functions to the melancholy gratification of supporting by their suffrage the opinions of some adroit and powerful individual).—But to form the national



assembly would require more time ; it was necessary that the success of the lower assemblies, and the operations they might have executed, should first have overcome the public and other prejudices, and have given an opening for communicating the like constitution to those provinces\*, which were at present governed by assemblies ; whose form, though faulty, was still admired by the vulgar, protected by those whose credit it secured, and often valued by that very people who were the victims of its defects.

The first object to which M. Turgot conceived he should be able to direct the attention of these assemblies, was the reform of taxation.

It has been proved that, under whatever form a tax may be established, it is raised solely upon the annual produce of land, after all the expences used for obtaining that produce have been deducted.

\* Pays d'Etats.

—It has secondly been proved, that the only just assessment is that which is proportioned to the net produce of land.— And, lastly, that the only possible way of fixing this, or any regular proportion whatever, is to levy the tax directly upon this produce.

To become convinced of the first of these truths, it will be sufficient to observe, that the net produce of land being the only real wealth that is annually reproduced, it is upon that only that an annual tax can be laid. Besides, if we examine the different forms of taxes that have been established or proposed, and consider upon what produce they are really raised; we shall find that ultimately it is either upon the net produce of land, or upon the net interest of capitals (that is, upon the interest that remains after the compensation for the risk to which the capitals were exposed, and for the trouble of management have been deducted, which is the only way of estimat-

ing the real interest \*).—Let us suppose then a tax referred to these two objects, and that the amount was first raised from the land only; is it not evident that every money-holder might without loss lend at a lower interest? Suppose again, the whole tax to be raised upon the net interest of money, could the money-holders, without sustaining a loss, lend their money at the same interest?—There ought therefore to be a change in the rate of

• The demonstration of this may be found in the Treatise of M. Smith: And we quote it the more readily, as he rejects the opinion we have here adopted, though it be a natural corollary from the principles laid down in his work. But he seems not to have been conscious that the establishment of a direct tax upon land, and the suppression of that levied directly upon the net interest of capitals, would produce any fall in the rate of interest. This rate is undoubtedly determined by the mass of capitals compared with that of the demands, if we are to suppose all other circumstances to continue the same; whereas in this case they are changed.—It is thus that the suppression of the tax upon the purchase of lands encreases the price to the seller, and diminishes it to the buyer.

interest



interest to restore the equilibrium : Can the interest of money have any other measure than that of the capitals employed in the purchase of lands ? Whatever exceeds this proportion, is it not either a compensation for risk or for trouble ?

The second proposition is self-evident. Justice seems to require that each individual should contribute to the public service, in proportion to the sum of which the public authority secures to him the possession. However trifling be the property, it is still an advantage, and a means of subsistence independent of labour.

Lastly, the absolute impossibility of fixing this proportion under any form but that of a direct tax, will not admit of dispute : And if, in substituting a direct tax instead of those which are already established, any class in the community whatever should find an advantage at the expence of another, it is evident that the old taxes were not distributed with equity ;

and, instead of being a cause for complaint, there would be reason to rejoice at this injustice being repaired.

But every class of citizens would be gainers; for this mode, which is the only just one, and is neither injurious to reproduction nor to industry, is at the same time attended with least expence in the collection. It is the only tax which exposes the citizens to no restraint or vexation, by which they are subjected to no mortifications, and in which there exists no secret conflict between the revenue-officers and the people;—a conflict that creates distrust between the king and his subjects; arms one part of the nation against another; consumes the time of a considerable number of persons; corrupts equally the retainers of the treasury, and those who make it a practice to brave their measures; and obliges government to make laws against the latter, at which humanity and justice equally revolt.

A direct

A direct tax, thus relieved of expences of collection, and easily proportioned to the incomes of those upon whom it falls, would have another double advantage. It would never be paid but by those who were able to pay it : And it would be regulated by a form so simple, that the total amount of the tax, with its successive diminutions or augmentations, and the sum which each individual contributed, would necessarily be known by all the citizens ; who would no longer be deceived respecting the public interest or their own.

The kind of anarchy that has reigned in Europe from the conquests of the Romans to the middle of the last century, had prevented the establishment of this mode of taxation ; which, though it maintains order in a state, requires to be preceded by order. It is doubtful whether the ancients had any idea of it ; and it is even so recent among the moderns, that when the *dixieme* was established, during the war of the succession, this tax, the  
only



only one which could not invade the right of property, was the only tax where Louis XIV. was afraid of this effect \*. Hence almost all the nations of Europe groan under the weight of taxes that are much more burthenfome from their form, than from their real amount.

If any obstacle occurs to the reform of the system of taxation, it does not lie in the large amount of the contributions which are to be reformed; these being already indirectly paid out of the net produce, but in a mode more burthenfome, from their being unequally distributed and augmented by the whole expence attending their collection.

\* The duke de St. Simon relates in his Memoirs, that Louis XIV. consulted upon this subject father Le Tellier, who presented a memorial signed by a number of divines, in which it was decided, that the king had not only a right to levy the *dixieme*, but to take possession of the whole property of his subjects. The duke de St. Simon had this anecdote from Marechal, the king's first surgeon, to whom the king had told it.

The first real obstacle will be found in the necessity this reform imposes of framing a *Register* that shall contain an accurate Representation of the value of all estates. It is obvious that a single direct tax upon land, assessed at hazard, would be more oppressive than indirect taxes, which at least are attended with a kind of compensation; and that all the advantage it would in this case possess, would be the impossibility of persisting in it.—The second obstacle arises from the difficulty of the reform itself\*.

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It was therefore in the formation of a register, and in the assessment of the taxes necessary to replace those that would be successively suppressed, that M. Turgot would immediately have employed these new assemblies.

\* A long discussion respecting this reform is inserted in the original work at this place, which the translator has thrown into an Appendix, which may be consulted here.

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The two lowest orders would have been sufficient. Government could make the assessment with ease both upon the cantons and the provinces, whenever that of the parishes and elections was executed with any accuracy, and upon an uniform plan laid down by the legislator : for the whole should originate from the same authority, be directed by the same spirit, and regulated by the same principles†. —The present assemblies might have executed the same operations with sufficient accuracy, in the Pays d'Etats.—The mode of settling accounts would, at the same time, be reduced to the utmost simplicity : a direct intercourse between the royal treasurer and the individual treasurer of each canton (charged with collecting the taxes and distributing the sums requisite for local expences) would be sub-

† See respecting the framing of Registers ; the Reports of the Proceedings of the Provincial Assembly of Upper Guienne ; and the Memoirs of Academy of Sciences for the year 1782.



stituted for those complicated operations, which are executed with so little regularity and so great loss by the corps of revenue officers.

These assemblies were also to have the care of public works. Each assembly was to fix the proportion of burthen and the method of payment for its own territory. Works, the utility of which respected a whole province, or the kingdom in general, were to be regulated and distributed throughout the province or kingdom by government; but always to be apportioned and directed within each canton by its assembly, whose interest it would always be to prevent abuses, which they would have information and power to accomplish.

The establishments for education, charitable foundations, and the reliefs to be given to the poor, were also to be administered by these assemblies upon a general  
plan

plan laid down by government: a plan already prepared by M. Turgot; and which, like all his other plans, bore the stamp of his genius. Thus charity-foundations would no longer have disgraced and corrupted the human race, and swallowed up future generations. Families were to be supported, and the unfortunate relieved, without encouraging idleness and debauchery; and for the first time public education would be the means of producing men properly instructed in the duties of the station they are to fill, and led to the practice of virtue by a degree of good sense, which (thanks to the habit of imbibing nothing but truth from their infancy) would be a preservative from the yoke of prejudice and the snares of error.

Each canton was to be charged with furnishing the king with volunteer recruits to supply the place of the militia.

M. Turgot

M. Turgot intended also to employ these bodies in the gradual suppression of feudal rights, which, according to him, could never be considered as real property. Some, as the feudal tythes, the field-rents and the quit-rents, might represent property, or be really a part of the price for which it had been sold. Others, much more numerous, were real taxes, whose usurpation had been made legal by the consent of the king. And others, as the privilege of hunting and shooting, the privilege respecting mills, and the right of sale, were real exclusive privileges. Lastly, there were some, as the right of dispensing justice, and a few of those to which cases of mortmain were subject, that were either an usurpation of the right of sovereignty, or a violation of the law of nature.

M. Turgot thought that the rights which represent property ought to be as sacred as property itself; and that, without examining into their origin, all those  
should



should be regarded as the representatives of property, which had the appearance of it : but he thought at the same time, that every contract, every deed that gave to property an eternal form, necessarily implied a power in the king to restore the common right whenever he should think it necessary ; because no man can extend to eternity the right he has in his property ; and because this right ending with his life, every condition that extends beyond this term receives its sanction not from natural but civil right. —The rights which represent property ought therefore to be redeemable at the average price of property of the same kind.

Those which represent taxes, or are exclusive privileges (a kind of tax always oppressive), should be intitled only to an indemnification regulated by the average rate of interest. They are not property, but an engagement of government, that from its very nature cannot

be perpetual. We here see the application of the principles laid down by M. Turgot in the article *Foundation*; and what he did respecting public carriages and market duties, have furnished another example of it.—But there is a difference between these rights, and those which represent property. With respect to the former, the king may oblige the proprietor to accept an indemnification, in consequence of his right to alter the mode of taxation. But he has not the same power over the latter, the redemption of which cannot be effected but with the free consent of the possessor.—The third kind of privileges may be suppressed without any indemnification at all; because usurpations of the royal power can be lawful by no length of possession; and because it is bestowing a favour upon such as possess a right contrary to natural right, not to oblige them to make a restitution for it, and to excuse them upon the score of an ignorance, which general

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prejudice

prejudice might certainly render pardonable.

It was the business of the legislator to lay down the principles and laws by which these operations should be directed, and to class the different privileges ; but the execution of the redemptions and the individual arrangements could not be made with equity, and without respect of persons, but by the municipal assemblies.

These assemblies were further to be employed in the liquidation of the national debt.—But they were first to bestow their attention to the loans and redemptions that would be necessary for the liquidation of the debts of individual towns and provinces ; and for extinguishing a considerable number of offices, that were either useless, or that at least ought not to be venal. These articles do not enter into the estimate of the national debt, because the tax that annually pays for them is not connected with the royal treasury : but in  
the



the eyes of an enlightened minister they make a part of it, as their expence, under whatever form paid, is a part of the real taxes.

But independent of the gradual redemption of the general debt, which he hoped would be the fruit of œconomy, of a diminution of its interest, and a fall in the rate of money (which would have been accelerated by the reform of taxation), M. Turgot had still greater resources in view.—The royal *demesnes* were to be regulated by the new assemblies; the increase of the produce was to be employed in the liquidation of debts; and the assemblies were hereafter to be commissioned to offer them to public sale, gradually and in small quantities—as soon as some books easy enough to be read, and sufficiently weighty to carry conviction, should have shewn how little foundation there was for the principle, that the *demesne* of the crown is inalienable; and the

absurdity of applying this principle to the demesne of a king who enjoys the right of imposing taxes; with the advantage that the people would derive from this alienation—as soon as these truths, so simple and yet so little known, were become the common and general opinion—and as soon as the confidence in these new assemblies was so far established as to give them hopes of selling these lands, and also the right of resuming the mortgaged demesnes at their real value.

The clergy enjoy near a fifth part of the property of the kingdom. This ought to be considered as a species of landed property belonging to the nation, and employed in the maintenance of public worship, and the instruction of the people.

But as worship is necessarily the result of religious opinions, respecting which a man can have no other lawful judge than his own conscience, it is evident that the  
expences

expences of public worship ought to be voluntary on the part of those who believe the sentiments upon which it is founded; and that there is a kind of injustice in fixing this expence upon funds to which all the citizens have an equal right.

The moral instruction of the people ought to be absolutely distinct both from religious opinions and the ceremonies of worship. The morals of all nations have been the same; and almost every where they have been corrupted solely by being mixed with religion. The truth of the principles of morality is shaken by connecting them with opinions, which are either openly controverted, or rejected in secret by a considerable number of men, and particularly by those men who have the greatest influence on the fate of mankind. Factitious duties are mixed with real duties, though often inimical to them; and the latter are in the mean time always sacrificed to



the former. By this mixture the natural order of duties is inverted, and real duties are evaded or violated by the plea of practising some imaginary virtue.

But while we admit the truth of these principles, we must equally admit that, as the people have been accustomed to see the expences of worship taken from the public property, and to receive instruction from the mouths of the clergy, there would be danger, and even a kind of injustice in shocking at once these habits by too sudden a reform. This is one of those critical cases in which, in order at once to be equitable, and to be scrupulously guided by the voice of truth, it is necessary to wait till the common opinion should become favourable.

In the mean time it is easy to see, though the present possessors were to be left undisturbed, that the suppression of the ecclesiastics or religious of both sexes (who are absolutely useless both to the instruction of the people, and the service  
of

the parishes) would gradually produce immense property to the nation; the disposal of which, by giving new vigour to agriculture, and by increasing the number of landholders, would serve to pay a part of the national debt. It is also clear, that by substituting in the place of the territorial revenues of the bishops and parochial clergy, salaries, which should be paid by the communities or diocesses, we should, in the first place, gain the advantage of destroying the tythes; which, from being raised upon the real, not the net produce of lands, form a tax unjust in its assessment, and destructive to agriculture. Secondly, It would be the source of a considerable œconomy; as these salaries ought to be rendered suitable to the case of persons charged with the public instruction, of whom it is the duty to set examples of simplicity and disinterestedness. Thirdly, All contests between the pastors and their communities would be destroyed,

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by

by which their ministry is at least rendered useless.

In the mean time this reform, important not only to the national wealth, but to the improvement of public instruction, and even the maintenance of religion; could not be effected in a way really useful, but by intrusting the assemblies with the care of executing these operations. Without this, the property in the hands of the treasury would be badly managed, be sold at a low price, or perhaps soon become the prey of courtiers; and the wealth that ought to result from the distribution of this property, and from its returning into its natural course, would not be felt till a considerable period had elapsed; like the destruction of the convents in England, which at first was more injurious than useful.

Among the evils to which the people were exposed, there was one which M.



Turgot could not see in all its extent, without studying to discover a remedy.

In all the provinces of France, cantons more or less extensive are covered with marshes, whose exhalations occasion epidemic fevers, weaken the constitution, and shorten the term of human life. Their produce as marshes is very trifling; whereas if they were drained they would produce rich crops and fruitful pastures; and the increase of wealth and population occasioned by it would at the same time give new vigour to the industry and cultivation of the neighbouring lands.—These evils are not so much the work of nature as of the avidity of men. The obstructions made to the course of waters by the proprietors of rivers and ponds, &c. are the first cause of these inundations; and it is from a mistaken interest, in order to add a little to their present revenue, that they consign the lands themselves to sterility, and thousands of their fellow creatures to calamity and death. This cause, which renders

ders the evil more cruel, makes the remedy more difficult. Experience as well as reason proves the inutility of opposing laws to the evil ; there being no law that crafty and protected avarice knows not how to evade or withstand.—The only remedy lies in the purchase of those privileges, whose operation is so fatal ; and of those lands which, by their very nature, are injurious to all that surround them.

The additional produce of the drained lands, and the profit of mills constructed upon other principles, and intrusted to the care of the communities, (whose interest it would be to prevent disorder) together with the produce of the ponds, &c. and fisheries, which would be turned into arable or pasture ; would, in almost all cases, defray the expence of purchase and indemnification ; as well as the labour that would be necessary to repair the disorders occasioned both by ancient abuses, and by the hand of nature. But the most

minute details, particular local information, an impartiality superior to suspicion, and an authority which, without seeming the result of over-strained power, should resist all murmurs and triumph over all obstacles; all these requisites are but too necessary to secure success to these economical arrangements; unless they are entrusted to an assembly of men freely chosen by real proprietors, and which to the authority deputed to them by government, unite the confidence that such a constitution can alone inspire. These operations, and those of the high roads, would give abundant source of employment to the people—an immense advantage, if not a necessary precaution, in great reforms.

In short, the municipal assemblies appeared useful to M. Turgot, in order to form enlightened citizens, of whom some might be qualified for the discussion of affairs,



affairs, and others for filling the departments of administration. They might be employed in the election of proper persons to occupy certain necessary offices, which it was absurd to render venal, and in the result hereditary. Government could not do this with sufficient judgment, either because its knowledge of proper persons was defective, because these persons ought to possess the confidence of the people, or because their functions ought to be out of the reach of ministerial influence.

Such was the plan, equally comprehensive and simple, by which M. Turgot proposed to destroy successively every disorder of administration, and to create a new one strictly conformable to the genuine principles of political œconomy. It was thus he meant to prepare for future ministers, who might wish to carry reform into the other departments of government, the necessary instruments to insure success to their views,  
and

and intitle them to the confidence of the nation.

What the citizens had to hope, and what others had to fear from this plan, is left to the judgment of the reader.

## CHAPTER

## CHAPTER VII.

**A**MONG those who have ventured a critique of the administration of M. Turgot, there are some who are not entitled to an answer. But there are also accusations that merit attention, not for the honour of M. Turgot, but for the benefit of those who are destined to occupy the first offices of government, and to whom it may be useful to know beforehand how they will be judged even by men of purest intentions.

M. Turgot has been accused of neglecting what is called the detail of finance. The history of his administration furnishes the answer.—It is true that he set no great value upon a certain class of calculations, which require nothing more than a moderate knowledge of arithmetic. Certain others, if we would avoid deception, should be made by mathematicians :



ticians : and M. Turgot, who knew all the importance of political arithmetic, had taken measures that such details as office might furnish, should be put into the hands of mathematicians capable of deducing from them useful inferences, and of determining at once their exactness and probability.

It is also true that M. Turgot treated with little distinction those persons whose principal merit consisted in having accumulated considerable wealth, and who employed it for the purpose of accumulating more ; for he believed, that in a society where there existed distinctions of rank, which wealth tended to confound, a minister, though in himself the greatest advocate for natural equality, and the most perfectly convinced that inequality of rank is useless or dangerous, ought still to respect the public prepossession ; and not to authorize by his example a confusion, whose only effect is to strengthen

en avidity, by giving it the double motive of avarice and pride.

had been said of M. Turgot that he was too precipitate in his operations.—One of his friends accused him of it one day during his administration. *How*, replied he, *can you make me this reproach, who know so well the emergencies of the people; and that none in my family survive the gout beyond the age of fifty?*

He has equally been accused of being too slow.—But the persons who say this forget, that if we subtract from the twenty months that he was in administration, the time that he lost by the attacks of the gout, and by the seditions that were excited against him, it consisted only of a year. They are ignorant of the utility of his measures on the one hand; and, on the other, exaggerate the importance of those abuses which M. Turgot only spared, because he wished to attack them in  
their

their source; wishing to root out the evil, and not to *perfect* \* it.

It has been further said, that he consulted no person.—It is true, that the frankness of his character did not permit him to have recourse to this mode of flattering self-love in others; and it is also true, that when he had convinced himself by study and experience of the truth of the principles he had adopted, he asked no

\* *Le Perfectionner*. This was his expression; and it implies a great deal. For instance, not being able to effect the total suppression of the rights of mortmain, he did not wish to abolish them merely in the king's estates, where government besides had the power of mitigating the exercise of them; lest he should consecrate the opinion (though only by his silence) which treated these rights as lawful property in other cases.—It is distressing that this opinion, which was proscribed by Louis Hutin, should be adopted by government for the first time in the preamble of the edict of 1778. The author of the Decisions of Lamoignon, was better instructed in the principles of natural justice and of our public law, and more strictly conformed himself to them.

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person



person what he ought to believe. But he nevertheless consulted every man from whom he could hope to derive useful information: but not always those who thought themselves capable of giving advice; and still less those who had been in the practice at once of being consulted with, and of deceiving ministers.

It has been alledged against him, that he had too much impetuosity and inflexibility of character.—I venture to advise those who made this objection to him, to reflect with themselves, and descend to the bottom of their own heart, and see whether in their public and private life, instability and not firmness has not been the cause of all their errors. Cato himself, put to this proof, would have acknowledged that instability had led him into more errors than his inflexibility. Instability is a defect that nature has given us, that it is not in our power to destroy, against which it is constantly necessary to be on our guard, and which no man of  
sincerity

sincerity and courage will ever boast that he has always subdued.

He has been accused of want of address.—Dr. Price, one of the most enlightened and virtuous men in England, had repeated the accusation. “ I might  
 “ have merited it,” replied M. Turgot in a letter to him, “ if you had meant no  
 “ other want of address, than that of not  
 “ being able to trace the springs of the in-  
 “ trigues that have been brought into play  
 “ against me by men much more adroit  
 “ in this business than I am, than I ever  
 “ shall be, or ever wish to be. But it seem-  
 “ ed as if you imputed to me the want of  
 “ address of grossly shocking the general  
 “ opinion of my nation ; and in this re-  
 “ spect I believe that you did justice  
 “ neither to me nor to my country,  
 “ which possesses much more information  
 “ than is generally imagined in Eng-  
 “ land ; and which perhaps is more easily  
 “ brought back to a right way of thinking

“ than themselves.” — M. Turgot believed that in a monarchy, where the beneficent, firm, and enlightened will of the prince can alone do good, all the address of a minister should consist in discovering to him the truth ; and this M. Turgot had never disguised. With the confidence of the prince, nothing he thought was to be feared ; and without it every thing great was impossible. He believed that it was not permitted him to purchase the friendship of an individual, or of a body, by sacrifices made at the expence of the nation. He believed that no mixture of imposture, no degree of empiricism however trifling, should sully the purity and the conduct of a public character. He knew these means indeed, but he disdained to use them. He dissembled neither his principles nor his views, because he was more disposed by his character to trust to reason and to the natural goodness of the human heart, than  
to



to fear the errors and the depravity of mankind.—Such was that want of address which has been so much talked of, and which it would be difficult not to regard as the appendage of a strong and elevated mind.

It has been said that he was deficient in the knowledge of mankind.—Yet few philosophers had acquired a deeper knowledge of man such as he is by nature alone; and such as he is when modified in society by the prejudices of religion, of country, of government, of his corps; in short, by all those interests which act upon him at once.—But he was little skilled in the art of decyphering the characters of individuals; of knowing the little details of their interests and passions; the manner in which they conceal or disclose them; and the springs of their intrigue and imposture. And of what value would this knowledge have been to him, which frequently can neither be acquired nor em-

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ployed, but by means that he would have blushed to make use of?—This defect has perhaps contributed to deprive France of a minister that would have formed its happiness: but it was the consequence of the elevation of his mind; as his pretended want of address was of its dignity and purity\*.

Lastly, M. Turgot has been accused of a spirit of system.—If by this is meant, that all his operations, even in their detail, were so many parts of a regular and general plan which he had formed; that this plan, and the motives which dictated all his decisions, were the result of a small number of principles strictly connected

\* If M. Turgot sometimes deceived himself respecting the views, the conduct, and character of certain individuals, he guessed with great sagacity and justness, their talents, their capacity for business, and the class and degree of their understanding.—We have seen many instances of such penetration, very contrary to the common opinion, which the event has verified.

with

with each other; some of them discovered by himself, and none of them adopted by him till he had scrupulously analysed and developed all their proof: if this be the meaning of the word, we acknowledge, without regret, that M. Turgot possessed a spirit of system, and that he carried it farther than any other man. In this case the reproach contains the highest, and to some the most formidable eulogium that can be bestowed on a minister; it proclaims at once the strength of character that is necessary to form and execute a comprehensive and well-combined plan, and an inclination to prefer truth and duty to interest and passion; while it takes away all hope from those whose interests are contrary to the principles adopted by the minister.—If by system is meant a want of respect either for established prejudices; or for the maxims of feeble and uncertain politics; or for contradictory principles, whether held at one and the



same time, or in succession ; or for operations by halves, planned from narrow and incoherent views ; M. Turgot had indeed the spirit of system ; and it is still his eulogium.—But if we understand by spirit of system, a love of novelty and paradoxes, a taste for singular measures, vague principles, or those general maxims which are almost universally applied because they decide nothing ; then never did man less merit the imputation. He loved truth under whatever form it shewed itself, whether ancient or modern, whether common or uncommon ; but no man was a greater enemy to vague ideas and pretended general maxims ; and it was precisely to guard himself with the greater safety against them, that he had reduced all his principles to a regular system, of which he had analysed the various parts \*.

While

\* We have not included in these reproaches the love of innovation, because this accusation cannot be made

While every man, whose power or wealth was built upon the ruins of liberty or the fortune of the citizens, congratulated himself upon the disgrace of a minister, faithful to his king and his country; the event excited also considerable regret. Honest men saw with grief an equitable and humane minister removed from public affairs; whose integrity made them disposed to pardon measures which they did not understand, or which wounded their prejudices. But a few virtuous and enlightened citizens

made but by persons given up to the most shameful ignorance. We need only look around us to be convinced of the interest the public has in seeing great innovations carried into effect. A taste for novelty, like the spirit of system, is an accusation that fools and coxcombs never fail to advance against men of genius and virtue.

“*What need of innovation?*” — said a farmer-general in 1775, with great simplicity: — “*Are we not well as we are?*”

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only felt *all* the extent of the irreparable loss. The people, who had not had time to perceive the good which he had conferred upon them, were ignorant of the misfortune they experienced: for in France, as in every other country that does not enjoy the liberty of the press, the people have no opinion respecting public affairs, unless where imposture and faction find the art (more easy and more dangerous than is commonly supposed) of giving them an opinion.

Among those, to whom the removal of M. Turgot was a source of real grief, we ought to mention M. de Voltaire. 'This man, illustrious by his poetical genius, by the original charms of his style, and the astonishing variety of his talents, was become, as it were, the apostle of humanity, the declaimer against public evils, and the avenger of all individual wrongs. The introduction of M. Turgot into administration had been one of the most  
delicious



delicious moments of M. de Voltaire's life. France had few citizens so strongly attached to their country; and human nature had never met with so warm an advocate. He had entertained the most extensive hopes, when he saw reason, justice, and hatred of error and oppression, called to the foot of the throne.—M. Turgot had been obliged to intreat him to moderate his joy and his hopes; for at the commencement of his administration it was necessary to employ as much pains to stop the enthusiasm of the friends of reason and public prosperity, as other ministers take to excite it in the multitude. The destruction of the farm of taxes in the country of Gex had encreased the attachment of M. de Voltaire; and he felt the dismissal of M. Turgot as if it had been a personal misfortune\*.

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\* In the midst of the public joy of the court and of all those whose power was to be feared, he had the courage

We were witnesses, in 1778, of the enthusiasm, mixed with a tender and profound respect, which the name and sight of M. Turgot produced in this illustrious old man. We saw him, in the midst of the public acclamation, and overwhelmed with the weight of crowns of laurel which the nation lavished on him, advance eagerly towards M. Turgot with

courage to express, in *An Epistle to a Man*, the sentiments that had penetrated his soul. This was the title of the verses that he addressed to M. Turgot; and if M. de Voltaire has been stigmatized for too grossly praising ministers when in power, and too readily abandoning them when out of power, this epistle will furnish the best apology. Never had he celebrated a minister in the height of power in such high terms as he used to M. Turgot in his disgrace.—We learn from hence that he did not confound the minister (who was no longer any thing when he ceased to be a minister, but whom he had however thought it allowable to praise in order to excite to do a little good) with the statesman, the philosopher, and the citizen; who appeared but so much the greater when, being left to himself, he possessed only his virtues, his genius, and his actions,

tottering

tottering steps, seize his unwilling hands, and kiss and bathe them with his tears, crying, with a stifled voice, *Let me kiss the hand which has signed the salvation of the people.*

## CHAPTER



## CHAPTER VIII.

**M.** TURGOT saw with grief the destruction of the hopes he had conceived of repairing the misfortunes of his country, and of fixing upon an immoveable foundation the happiness of a great nation. But his grief was that of a magnanimous soul, whose tranquility and happiness depend neither upon the revolutions of a court, nor the judgment of the multitude.—The repeal of the edicts respecting the *Corvées* and Corporate Rights, afflicted him more sensibly than the loss of his office. Till then he had believed that the good projected by him was only delayed; and as he had already destroyed what he thought most insupportable in the calamities of the people, he consoled himself with the idea, that the progress of light would at last, though more slowly, open the eyes of all, and bring about a reform, the utility of which

which was already acknowledged by every enlightened mind? But he could not help groaning when he saw the yoke which his hands had broken, fall heavily again upon the people. This event would have consoled perhaps a man who regarded only his own reputation. If his disgrace had not been followed by the repeal of the laws that he had advised, it might have been attributed to some involuntary fault (for his virtue was above every other suspicion); but the repeal of his laws proclaimed that he had been guilty of no crime, but that of wishing to save his country. Never did envy, which is so frequently blind, more effectually serve the man whom it wished to injure, by confounding his cause with the interest of the public prosperity, and with the liberty of the people, of the towns, and of the inhabitants of the country.

Reduced to a private situation, M. Turgot experienced not that frightful  
void,

void, the just but dreadful punishment of ambitious men when deserted by fortune. The sciences, which he had cultivated, easily filled up all his time.

He had found, in his pursuits in natural philosophy, that a more extensive knowledge of the mathematics would be serviceable to him, and he resolved to acquire it.—He carried with him, into his study, that spirit of metaphysical analysis which had been so sure a guide to him in the other sciences. The demonstrations which he found in books did not therefore always satisfy him. In the mathematics in general, and particularly in algebra, we only require that the demonstrations should be strict; and as it is of consequence to proceed, we do not stop to solve the metaphysical difficulties that present themselves, because we are sure that the habits of calculation will remove the uncertainty which these difficulties seem to create. M. Turgot was desirous that the most trifling obscurities should



should be cleared up ; he was also desirous that the algebraist should explain the motives which led him to the operations that conducted him to his purpose, for what reason he had preferred them, and by what trains of reflection they had presented themselves to him. — It would perhaps be useful if could conform ourselves to these ideas in elementary books. We may, without doubt, be excused these discussions, if we consider algebra merely as a distinct science, or as an instrument useful to the other sciences; but they cannot be dispensed with if we regard it as a study calculated to form and to strengthen our reason, and especially to make us acquainted with the progress of the human mind in its search after truth. These details are useless to men born with a particular talent, and to such perhaps as have made the pure mathematics the subject of their study : but are they equally useless to young people who study these sciences with the sole view of

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knowing

knowing their elements, or of applying them to the objects of their pursuit? If we were to follow the ideas of M. Turgot, we should less frequently see men, who in their education appeared to have carried their knowledge of mathematics to a very considerable extent, incapable, after a few years, of applying their elements to the slightest practical question; nor should we see men of learning, justly celebrated in other respects, embarrassed when left to themselves, by calculations greatly inferior to the knowledge which they had acquired in their youth.

M. Turgot sought, at the same time, to bring the thermometer to greater precision; an instrument, the perfection of which he thought, with reason, would be of very great importance to natural philosophy in general, and particularly to meteorology.

This last science, still too novel, was a favourable object of M. Turgot's studies,  
both

both on account of its novelty, and because it promised a rich harvest of truths valuable in our enquiries into the laws of nature, and whose applications were useful to the improvement and security of the productions of the earth, as well as to the preservation of health and of life.

He continued his experiments upon distillation *in vacuo*, of which we have already spoken.

Lastly, convinced that the greatest benefit that could be conferred upon mankind, would be to facilitate and multiply the means of communicating their ideas, and of freeing that communication from the fetters that prejudices oppose to it; he sought, with the Abbé Rochon, after various expeditious, convenient, and cheap methods of multiplying copies of writings, to supply the place of printing; that the numerous constraints which retard, though they do not altogether put a stop to the service which the discovery of printing ought one day to produce to



the human race, might at least be abolished, if not by reason, yet, by the impossibility of succeeding in enforcing them.

M. Turgot had preserved all his passion for literature and poetry. He had never lost the habit of making verses; an amusement that had been very precious to him in his travels, and during the sleepless nights that he experienced from the gout. But these verses he kept to himself, and scarcely permitted them to be seen by his bosom-friends. Some detached pieces found their way into the world, and they were ascribed to Voltaire by all the literati.—We know but of one Latin verse composed by M. Turgot, and which was intended for a picture of Dr. Franklin :

*Eripuit cælo fulmen, mox sceptrum tyrannis.*

—The French metrical verse was the kind of poetry that M. Turgot had chiefly cultivated. He had closely studied every

every thing appertaining to the French language ; and he had observed, that in a pronunciation tolerably distinct, it is more easy than is commonly supposed to distinguish short and long syllables. He concluded, from hence, that the quantity of metrical French verses might be distinguished, and their harmony felt by practised ears, and that a double advantage might be derived from it ; that of a poetry less monotonous, and that of fixing the prosody of the language ; which would have had real utility, by increasing the facility of making ourselves understood. Perhaps if M. Turgot had published a poem in metrical verse, filled with those sublime ideas and those important truths which were so familiar to him, he would have commenced this revolution in our poetry.—But he confined himself almost entirely to translating, and particularly to the translating of Virgil ; for this amusement was more adapted to the seasons

that we find he devoted to poetry, as he learnt the verses of the original by heart\*.

It was by such occupations that M. Turgot filled up his time.—A correspondence also with Doctor Smith upon questions of the greatest importance to the happiness of mankind; with Doctor Price upon the principles of social order, and upon the means of rendering the revolution of America useful to Europe, and of preventing the dangers to which this rising republic was exposed; with an English bishop, whom he dissuaded from the singular project of establishing monks in Ireland; and with Doctor Franklin upon the disadvantages of indirect taxes, and the happy effects of a territorial tax; afforded him interesting and delightful employment. — The desire of the general happiness of mankind was in him a real passion. Cold and narrow souls

\* He translated in this kind of verse the fourth book of the *Æneid*, and almost all the *Eclogues*.



have denied the existence of this sentiment; and which, with respect to them, has no existence. Volatile and superficial minds have believed that it cannot be employed in a useful manner, because they are incapable of raising themselves to those general and simple truths which are the eternal and immoveable basis of the common happiness of man.

When war was declared between France and England, M. Turgot saw how honourable it would be in the French nation that the vessel of Captain Cook should be treated with respect at sea. He composed a memorial, in which he proved that honour, reason, and even interest, dictated this act of respect for humanity: and it was in consequence of this memorial, whose author was unknown during his life, that an order was given not to treat as an enemy, the common benefactor of every European nation.

By a good fortune which disgraced ministers very seldom experience, he had preserved all his old friends, and had acquired others. We understand by the word friends, those whom he regarded as such; and not those who had given themselves the title from vanity or interest. Friendship with M. Turgot was tender, active, and courageous. He employed in the affairs and pursuits of his friends a greater activity than is usual in the case of personal pursuits; and a delicacy that, in a strong mind, is a proof of a lively and profound sensibility. In misfortunes that regarded himself only, he preserved that tranquillity which courage, supported and guided by reason, renders uniform; but by the misfortunes of his friends he was much agitated. Friendship did not make him blind to their faults; he saw them, and he judged them with indulgence. The union of some good qualities which  
merited,

merited attachment and confidence, was all, he thought, that could be required or expected from humanity. His study of human nature led him to this indulgence, which he extended to all men, but which the sentiment of friendship enhanced towards those whom he loved. He gave them his advice, but only in circumstances in which it could be useful to them; and he respected at the same time their liberty and their secrets, even though they had not been intrusted to him: a discretion that is seldom observed even in the truest friendships, but which nevertheless is calculated to render them more sweet and less subject to coolness or storms. He readily tolerated in his friends, sentiments that were contrary to his own, provided they were adopted with sincerity, and were neither incompatible with true probity, nor dictated by interest or by meanness.

The friends of M. Turgot loved him as he deserved to be loved. Never did a  
more



more true and mild sensibility contrive to make them excuse a superiority which they were obliged to acknowledge, though he did not intrude it upon them, but concealed it, without labouring to conceal it. This superiority therefore had no other tendency than to diffuse, amidst the sentiments they felt for him, a charm which in friendships for common men is never experienced. He had for his friends, persons either of elevated situation or deserved celebrity; and there was not one of them that did not esteem the title of the friend of M. Turgot as one of their first claims to the public favour. There were some much inferior to himself in knowledge, understanding, and talents; but he knew how to accommodate himself in order to be understood by them; and if at any time they felt his superiority, it was from the unexpected resources that they discovered in his understanding and information.

With

With employments so attractive and various ; with the happiness of loving and of being tenderly loved ; with the testimony of an unfulfilled conscience ; with the feeling, so seldom experienced by a minister, of having never disguised the truth to his prince who had called him forth, and never subscribed his hand to one act of oppression or injustice ; and, in short, of having never merited enemies, but by defending the nation against the prejudices and the interest of powerful individuals, and the public treasury against the avidity of intriguers of every kind ;—with enjoyments like these, that afford to a strong and comprehensive mind the pleasure of contemplating and possessing truth, M. Turgot might have promised himself a happy career ; his friends might have indulged themselves in the hope of enjoying for a time a man, whose superior information, whose amiable society, whose tender friendship, were  
one

one of their first blessings ; one of those sentiments that attach us to life, and that embellish it, or assist to support it.

Before his administration his attacks of the gout had been merely painful. The forced application to which he gave himself up in the midst of these attacks, had changed their nature ; and in his retirement, repose could not repair the disorders that a zeal for his duty had occasioned. The attacks were more and more dangerous, and he became at last the victim of his patriotism and his courage.—His last attack, which was so long and so painful, altered neither his mind nor his temper. Always employed, in the intervals of pain, sometimes with a work that one of his friends had published and in which he took an interest, sometimes in the fate of a literary man who was at that time unfortunate, and sometimes in the pursuit of his own thoughts, and in collecting metaphysical observations upon the connection of our ideas  
with



with the state of our organs, his friends could perceive no other effect but that of a sensibility so much the more affecting, as it appeared to be excited merely by their cares for him; and his soul saw with tranquillity the moment approach when, in conformity to the eternal laws of nature, he was going to fill, in another order of beings, the rank which these laws had destined to him \*.

\* March 20, 1781.

## CHAPTER

## CHAPTER IX.

**A**FTER M. Turgot's retirement, his thoughts were less employed upon political subjects, and especially upon such as had any connection with the administration of the laws of France. Such an employment would have reminded him in too painful a manner of the hope he had once had of executing those salutary ideas, and of effecting that good, which his information had pointed out to him : and the conduct of his successors was little calculated to afford him consolation.

Besides, he felt that the public would be entitled to the most minute details ; to an application of his principles to the country which had been under his administration ; and to the means of bringing into action the truths which he would have established. It was impossible to execute such a plan as this, without giving

ing room for injurious interpretations, and without incurring the suspicion of having aimed at a vengeance which was too much beneath him.

No person despised more the little secrets to which in every administration men of moderate talents attach so puerile an importance. The knowledge of whatever could influence the public happiness ought to be an advantage common to all; and the publicity of the measures of government seemed to him the surest restraint upon all abuses.—Every private individual has doubtless a right to publish these secrets, if he has come to the knowledge of them; but a man in office, to whom they have been entrusted, cannot employ them; and with respect to him only this right ceases to exist.—It was therefore to posterity only that M. Turgot could have related truth without restraint: for he did not wish to relate it by halves; he did not wish to stain by falsehoods, or even by reserves, a *Work*



consecrated to his country and to humanity.

Of such a work he had formed the project. He meant to have developed in it in a regular method, all his ideas respecting the human soul, the order of the universe, and the Supreme Being ; respecting the principles of society and the rights of man ; respecting political constitutions, legislation, and executive power ; respecting natural education ; and respecting the means of perfecting the human race relatively to the exercise and increase of its powers, the happiness of which it is susceptible, the extent of knowledge to which it may reach, the certainty, clearness, and simplicity of its principles of conduct, the delicacy and purity of the sentiments that spring up and develope themselves in the soul, and the virtues of which it is capable.

All the philosophical opinions of M. Turgot formed a system at once vast and

connected in all its parts. When particular questions of administration, of legislation, or of jurisprudence, were debated in his presence, it was often seen with astonishment, that he discovered not vague opinions, formed from a first glance, inspired by a kind of instinct, adopted by chance, and afterwards defended from vanity; but a settled opinion, that connected itself with his general system.— Was any particular abuse or disorder mentioned to him? In whatever country of Europe it prevailed, whatever branch of legislature it infected, he knew at once the origin of the evil, its effects, the causes which prolonged its duration, and the means of destroying it. One would have thought that it had been the particular object of his attention, if the simple and natural application of his general principles had not been obvious.

Lord Bacon has said, “ *That there has  
 “ not yet been found a man endowed with  
 T “ sufficient*

“ *sufficient firmness and strength of mind to*  
“ *dare to impose a law upon himself, of re-*  
“ *nouncing every theory, of destroying every*  
“ *prepossession that his mind has received,*  
“ *and of thus preparing for himself an in-*  
“ *telleſt which, like a ſmooth table of wax,*  
“ *might be diſpoſed to receive with the*  
“ *greateſt accuracy the ideas that obſerva-*  
“ *tion and experience ſhould preſent to it.*  
“ Thus the human mind is a mere un-  
“ digeſted heap of notions, imbibed in  
“ infancy, adopted by rote, and collected  
“ by chance. If a man free from pre-  
“ judices, of a mature age, and in the vi-  
“ gour of his faculties, would dare to  
“ undertake this buſineſs, what might  
“ we not expect from it? But no one  
“ has yet executed it, no one has even  
“ entertained the idea \*.”

M. Turgot was this very man, and  
M. Turgot only. How uſeful would it

\* This paſſage is tranſlated from the French.



have been to have known the principles, the connection, and the various parts of the system which he had so firmly combined, and which was so perfectly free from every opinion adopted without examination ! But M. Turgot had not even *begun* to write this important work ; and it is merely from his conversation, and from the ideas diffused through a small number of compositions which he left behind him, that I shall here attempt a slight sketch of the outlines of it.

THE remembrance of our sensations, and the faculty which we possess of reflecting upon, and of combining what is so remembered, form the only *source* of our knowledge. — The supposition that there exist regular laws, to which all external objects are so subjected, as to reappear at all times, and in all circumstances,

stances, just as they are determined by these laws, is the only foundation of the *certainty* of our knowledge. We have the consciousness of having observed this constancy; and an involuntary sentiment compels us to believe that it will continue to take place. The probability that results from this, great as it may be, is not a certainty. No necessary relation connects for us the past with the future; nor the constancy of what I have seen with that which I should continue to see, upon remaining in similar circumstances: but yet the impression which leads me to regard as existing, and as real, that which has presented to me this feature of constancy, is irresistible.

After feeling that I owe the idea of existence, and the opinion that any thing exists, only to the constancy with which I have seen certain combinations of sensations re-appearing and following regular laws, if I come at last to perceive through the whole of nature a general  
order

order from which nothing departs, and if I perceive in this order an intention and plan, which supposes an intelligence and an active power; from that moment I have the *idea* of the existence of a *Supreme Being*, the source of this universe; and the same cause obliges me to *believe* in this existence.—But M. Turgot believed that he perceived in all that we know of the universe indubitable traces not only of an order, but of a beneficent and conservatorial intention. He saw in physical and in moral evil nothing but the necessary consequence of the existence of beings possessed of feelings, and capable of reason, though in themselves limited. The perfectibility with which some beings are endowed, and particularly the human species, is the slow but infallible remedy of these evils.—He believed that as the mass of the phenomena of the universe displayed beneficent views, together with a power above the reach of our comprehension; we ought to believe that the



same order subsists in the parts of the universe concealed from our regards, and that we should not be stopped by the impossibility of explaining why they do not present a more perfect order according to our ideas (which are necessarily too limited to comprehend the whole). He considered this opinion as demonstrated; that is, as founded upon a probability, the superiority of which to the contrary probability was demonstrated: for if we except the proposition, or the series of propositions of that evidence, of which we have really an internal consciousness, there cannot exist, with respect to us, any other demonstration than in the sense first mentioned.

As the existence of *bodies* is, as to us, nothing but the permanence of substances whose properties answer to a certain order of our sensations, it follows from hence that their existence is no more certain, than that of other substances which equally discover themselves to us  
by

by their effects upon us ; and as our observations upon our own faculties, confirmed by those which we make upon other thinking beings which animate bodies as we do, do *not* point out to us any analogy between the substance which feels and thinks, and the substance which presents to us the phenomenon of extension or impenetrability, there is no reason to believe these substances to be of the *same* nature.—Thus the *immateriality* of the soul is not an opinion that requires any proofs ; for it is the simple and natural result of an exact analysis of our ideas, and of our faculties \*.

M. Turgot

\* M. Turgot often said, that a man who had never considered the question respecting the existence of external objects as a difficult subject, and worthy of engaging our curiosity, could make no progress in metaphysics.—He added, that no man who sincerely believed the territorial tax to be impracticable or unjust, could ever obtain any real insight into the administration of government.—This observation was as just as it was ingenious. It may be applied to all the sci-

M. Turgot believed that metaphysicians deceived themselves by imagining that the mind does not commonly acquire general or *abstract ideas*, but from the comparison of ideas less general. On the contrary, our first ideas are very general; since, as we see at first but a small number of qualities, our idea includes all the beings to which these qualities are common.—As we become more enlightened, and examine things more closely, our ideas become more individual, without ever arriving to the last degree; and what perhaps has misled metaphysicians is, that it is precisely at this very time that we discover that these ideas are more general than we had at first supposed.

M. Turgot did not regard the *definitions* of terms for fixing the sense of words, as strictly arbitrary. In reality words are meant to express complex ideas; and it

ences and all the occupations of life, and may thus form for each of them a sort of criterion sufficiently certain to be applied in practice.

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is to such of those ideas as it may be useful to combine and to examine, and which by a necessary consequence of the order of things exist in the perceptive faculty of a considerable number of men, that we ought to attach signs. Definitions then should serve not only to ascertain complex ideas, but also to *class* accurately the simple ideas that really compose, and which ought to compose them.

Every being capable of feeling and of reasoning must acquire *moral ideas*. These ideas must be the same: they are not therefore arbitrary; and the propositions which may be made up of them have a real truth, independently of the truth of definition.—The *motives* which make us prefer (whether for the sake of our internal satisfaction, or for the advantage of our social existence) that which is just to that which is unjust, equally spring from the nature of all beings possessed of feeling, and capable of reflection. It is therefore from the very nature of our existence,

istence, that we derive both the knowledge of moral truths, and the motives of conforming our conduct to them ; as well as the motives of interest, which make us depart from them.—The truth therefore of these principles of morals is at once real and independent of all speculative opinion ; and there exist motives for subjecting our actions to these principles, sufficient in almost all circumstances to influence men who are born in a country where civilization has made some progress, and where unjust laws do not lead to immorality and vice.

Among the moral sentiments which necessarily spring up in the heart of man, a *respect for truth* is one of the most useful, and one of those which nature most strongly inspires ; but which is also most vitiated in society. M. Turgot regarded this respect for truth as one of the principal duties of morality :—but as he exaggerated nothing, he agreed with enlightened moralists, that falsehood ceases  
to

to be culpable, whenever truth would occasion, either to ourselves or to others, not evil, but a wrong ; that is, an unjust evil. It is necessary too that silence, or the refusal to answer, in such case, should be in itself a clear answer, and be the source of a real injustice.—At the same time he thought that the man who said a thing contrary to truth was seldom absolutely free from blame. If the truth cannot be demanded from him, his fault is not in disguising it, but in placing himself more or less voluntarily in a situation that obliges him to disguise it. It is thus that a man who has promised to do an unjust thing is culpable in not keeping his word ; not because he violates his promise, but because he made the promise. It is thus also that a man who wounds another, even in the case of self-defence, is not culpable for having defended himself, but for having exposed himself to the extremity which made this defence necessary.—The institutions



tutions of society, by burthening men with unjust laws, and by obliging them outwardly to respect opinions which they despise in their hearts, and brave in their conduct; have destroyed that respect for truth, which is one of the first links of society, and one of the first sources of the happiness that men can derive from associating with their fellow-creatures.

But M. Turgot believed that we were able to *strengthen moral sentiments* in men, and to render them more delicate and just; either by giving exercise to these sentiments, or by teaching men to subject them to the search of sound and enlightened reason.—It was for this reason he considered novels as being books of morality; and even (he said) the only ones in which he had ever seen morality. It is there particularly too that we best observe the influence of our actions upon the conduct and the happiness of those who surround us; the most important and yet the most neglected part of morality.

lity. In fine, we may seek to no purpose in other books for anxious researches after the means of repairing the faults we may have committed ; another part of morality (as crimes are seldom irreparable) which is of no small importance, but which is the more neglected, because in almost every country the avarice and ambition of priests have endeavoured to substitute vain and absurd expiations in the place of this duty.

Does the *soul perish* with the body ?—  
M. Turgot believed that it did not. The kind of dependance which the thinking and sentient principle appears to have upon the body to which it is united, indicates, without doubt, that at the destruction of the body the soul must change its state ; but there is nothing in this event that appears to imply the destruction of a simple substance, all whose operations it is true have been for a long time intimately connected with the phenomena of organization, but have shown no analogy  
with

with them.—It seems to be proved from observation, that no substance is annihilated. The various combinations of its particles occasion a change in its form, and even cause it to disappear to our senses; but we do not the less believe that it has not ceased to exist. By what singular privilege then should the thinking substance alone be subject to destruction?—But what becomes of it? The wisdom that appears to pervade the œconomy of the universe should lead us to believe that this substance, capable of acquiring so many ideas, of reflecting upon its sentiments, and in short of improving itself, cannot lose the fruit of the exertions employed upon it by itself, or by external influences; and likewise that it may experience after death certain modifications occasioned by those which it experienced during life; and that it is perhaps in this new order, (of which yet we cannot form any idea) that an answer is to be found to the greatest objections that may be started  
against



against the wisdom that prevails in the arrangement of the universe. This order may in effect afford both an indemnification for our sufferings, as well as the reward of our virtues.—But M. Turgot went no further than this ; for it seemed to him strange to regard the governor of so many worlds as a monarch employing himself in distributing ribbons, or consigning to tortures ; as having a court, a Bastile, and executioners : And it appeared to him equally ill-judged for any to wish to assume his place for the purpose of creating a new universe, in which to console themselves for having been able to understand but a very small part of that which exists.

These ideas of the science of metaphysics, of which I have been able to give but a slight outline, had employed M. Turgot for a long time.—He was not fond of mentioning them, even to his dearest friends. Persuaded that he could throw a real light upon these subjects, the  
eternal

eternal food of disputes in almost all nations, and flattering himself that he had made some discovery, he still believed that a methodical and complete work was the only means of dissipating an obscurity, resulting merely from the difficulty of subjecting refined and complex ideas to a strict analysis; and he was further of opinion, that he could give no fragment of such a work, without weakening and almost annihilating the force of the arguments that resulted from the whole of it. At the same time, of all men who have entertained upon the same subjects a fixed opinion, no one possessed so strong and unalterable a conviction, or was so truly tolerant. He tolerated both scepticism, and the most firm belief in opinions contrary to his own, without permitting this opposition to alter in any respect his esteem for the talents, or his confidence in the virtues, of those who embraced them.

WHEN

WHEN men regularly associate, it can only be for the preservation of their natural rights. These rights are the security of themselves and their families, their liberty, and especially their property.—Man, over the product of the land he has cultivated, over the habitation which he has constructed, over the furniture or the tools which he has fabricated, over the provisions which he has collected, has a right which is the price of his labour; and the hope which he has entertained of preserving this fruit of his labour, and the grief that he experiences in losing it, (which is much greater than a simple privation) gives to this right a natural sanction, that obliges every other man to respect it.—In a society in its infancy, and scarcely above the savage state, every man knows well

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enough how to watch over his safety, and does not place it under the protection of laws but with a kind of repugnance. He has little to fear for his liberty. Slavery supposes a society already formed, and even considerably complicated. In short, the other infringements upon liberty are a consequence of the social state. Thus of all the rights of man, property is that for which he has most need of associating with his fellow-creatures, who enter into a reciprocal engagement with him to defend it, and by this association render its defence more secure and less perilous.— We may therefore without injustice, regard holders of property as essentially forming the society; and if we add, that among all nations where agriculture exists, the extent of their territory is the limit of the rights of their society; that the land-holders, are the only persons attached to that territory, by ties which they cannot break without renouncing their title; and that in short they only



really bear the burthen of the public expence ; it will be difficult not to regard land-holders as the only essential members of that society.

*Property* is nothing more than the free disposal of what we possess legitimately.—In a state of nature, whatever we enjoy, without having in any way robbed another of it, constitutes this property. In a state of society it becomes that which we have received from our family, or have acquired by our labour, or have obtained by bargain. Laws regulate the manner of this right ; but they do not form the right itself.—The free disposal of property includes the power of selling, giving, or exchanging whatever is our own ; and, if this property consists in commodities that re-produce themselves, of regulating this re-production, and enjoying as we please what is derived from it.—The only limit to this free disposal lies in doing nothing that may hurt the security,

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liberty,

liberty, property, and in general the rights of another.

*Natural liberty* consists in the right of doing whatever does not hurt the right of another.—This liberty must not be confounded with *civil* liberty, which consists in being obliged merely to obey the laws, for laws may violate natural liberty; nor with what is called *political* liberty, which consists in obeying only such laws as we have given sanction to, either by ourselves or our representatives.—Civil liberty is nothing more than an enjoyment, confirmed by the authority of laws, of a part, and frequently a very small part, of natural liberty, even in those countries which make the greatest boast of being free. Political liberty is in reality nothing more than the exercise of the right of sovereignty; a right that owes its existence merely to society, and ought not to be confounded with those rights for the support of which society was first instituted.

As the right of property, though anterior to, becomes modified in, society; in like manner natural liberty is subject to certain *limitations*, which result from the necessity which a man is under in society, of submitting a part of his actions to forms that are regular and universally binding. It is nature herself who marks these actions; and the law cannot, without attacking liberty, restrict *other* actions to this uniformity.—These limitations may be of two kinds: The one even respects objects in which we may have a real and just motive for not conforming ourselves to the law: the other, objects that are indifferent, seeming to deprive us of no liberty but that of following our own caprices. The nearer a legislation shall approach to the degree of perfection compatible with human nature, the less we shall observe of the first kind, which perhaps at last will absolutely disappear, from laws that affect at once the whole body of the citizens; and



even limitations, which seem to put no restraint but upon caprice, will become more and more rare.

We may already draw from these truths two important consequences.—In the first place, since the object of society is every where the same, since it has been every where instituted for the support of rights which belong equally to all men; why should *laws*, destined to obtain the same object, and to exercise their authority over beings of the same species, be *different*? They have all the same end, and that system of laws that is best calculated to obtain it, is the best for every nation. If variations are necessary, it is not in the laws themselves proper to be given to different nations, but in the means of bringing back to these laws those whom different faulty modes of legislation have misled.—In the second place, laws can be nothing more than general rules to which all the members of the society should conform themselves, in order to procure  
a more

a more certain and entire enjoyment of their rights. They cannot be *legitimate* if they do not fulfil *two* conditions; the one, of proceeding from a power legitimately instituted; the other, of not violating in any respect the natural rights which they ought to preserve. The mistake, that every law made by a legitimate power is just, has prevailed only in republican governments, and is confined, even among them, to such as have the appearance of being democratical: In every other country it would have appeared to be the expression of the most abject flattery. But this opinion, though adopted by the ancient republics, and renewed in modern times by the more violent partizans of liberty, is not the less erroneous. What, when the people of Athens decreed by a law the punishment of death against those who broke the statues of Mercury; and by another law banished from the city every man whose talents gave them umbrage; could

these laws be just or legitimate? And if other violations of the rights of nature may be less odious or ridiculous, yet the reason which condemns them remains in all its force. This second condition is in reality much more essential than the first; for if we suppose men subjected to a code of laws, not one of which violates any of their rights, but on the contrary which all concur to secure to them the enjoyment of their rights, it is of little consequence to their happiness, whether these laws received their sanction under a public form, or by tacit consent. These two conditions have often been confounded; not so much because we see bad laws spring up in absolute governments (for bad laws exist in all governments); but because unjust laws, proceeding from the authority of one man, appear unjust in the eyes of the multitude, while the injustices committed by a people appear so only to the wise. Besides, in the one case the people seem sacrificed to a few individuals; in  
the



the other, a few individuals appear sacrificed to the general welfare or existence.

If we follow societies in their progress, if we consider by what order and by what means, wealth is formed and distributed in them; we shall see the particular interest of each individual inducing him to attempt the *improvement of his fortune*.—If he cultivates land, his savings, employed in agricultural enterprizes, will serve to increase the produce of the land; and in consequence to multiply the quantity and abundance of necessaries, and to reduce prices.—Do his means of acquiring wealth lie in his labour and industry? He will seek the means of being able in a given time either to increase the quantity of his work, or to make it more perfect and valuable; and consequently to increase the sum total of the value, and to diminish the price of each individual article.—The merchant, on the other hand, will

will endeavour by more subtle speculations to enable himself to sell the same commodities at a lower price, or to furnish better at the same; he will endeavour to foresee the wants of the inhabitants of the countries to which he extends his commerce, and to supply them at a price that shall obtain him a preference.—Lastly, the money-holders, in order to derive a greater income from their capitals, will employ them in enterprizes of commerce and industry, and give them a circulation useful to the general weal: but the more they enlarge their capitals, the more will competition, and the necessity of not letting their money lie dead, induce them to lower their interest.—Thus in every class of society, the particular interest of every individual naturally tends to blend itself with the common interest; and while strict justice requires that every one should have the free use of his property, the real welfare of the whole accords with this equitable principle.

Agriculture

Agriculture ought to be *free*; because the cultivator necessarily seeks to produce the greatest quantity of necessaries, and to attend to such as with equal labour and expence will give the largest produce. All restraint therefore that does not derange the speculations of the cultivator, is a mere nullity; and that which does derange them, hurts production.—Industry ought to be free; because it is the interest of all those who give themselves up to industry to obtain a preference, either by the goodness of their labour, or by the quantity of what it produces. Every exclusive privilege with this class, therefore, is at once an injustice to those who do not partake of it, and a proceeding contrary to the general interest, since it diminishes activity.—Commerce ought to be free; because it is the interest of the trader to sell much, and to have for sale all that the buyers may have occasion for; and because competition, resulting from liberty of commerce, is the only means  
of



of depriving traders of the temptation and the desire of raising prices. Every restraint therefore is here hurtful, because it diminishes at once activity and competition.—The interest of money should be free; because it is then regularly governed by the profit it procures to the borrower, and the probability attending its being repaid. If the rate were fixed by law, by subjecting to pains and penalties those who depart from it, the activity of commerce would be injured, and its rate would be increased, which is meant to be diminished.—What right then can society have over these objects? Instituted for the purpose of preserving to man his natural rights, and bound to watch over the common interest of all; justice and the public good equally require it to confine its laws to the protection of every individual in the freest use of his property; to destroy those restraints which already subsist, instead of establishing new ones; and to prevent fraud and violence from

from imposing any thing contrary to law.

To procure to men the quiet and free use of their property, it is necessary to establish a *fund* for the payment of the expences requisite for the common defence, and for the execution of the laws. Besides, a state of society necessarily requires public works destined to the advantage of all the citizens, or of the inhabitants of a town, a village, or a canton: and these ought not to be made, but at the expence of all who derive advantage from them; and yet they cannot be well executed, or would frequently be executed in a way hurtful to the right or the interest of individuals, if they were arbitrarily abandoned to their direction. In fine, it may be useful to encourage by rewards, services rendered to the community in general. From hence results the necessity of a contribution.—What then, in this respect, will be the right of society  
over

over individuals? It is obvious that the amount of this contribution ought not to exceed that which is strictly necessary to the support and prosperity of the people; or rather, it ought to stop precisely at that point, where it is more useful to every individual to pay this contribution than not to pay it. To the motive of justice may be added another of public utility: for the excess of impost withdrawn from the consumers is absolutely lost to cultivation and industry; whereas a part of it at least would have been employed upon these objects, if the citizens had not thus been deprived of it.—We may observe again, that if the society has a right to raise a contribution, and to exact of every individual a part of his property; it does not follow from hence, that it has a right to restrain them in the disposal of the property that remains to them, or in the use of their liberty.—We see, in short, that this contribution, in order to be just, ought to be assessed in



in proportion to the advantages which are furnished by the society. It ought therefore to fall upon the land, to do this directly, and to be proportioned to the net produce; every other form of taxation being the source of infringements upon the liberty of the citizens, and upon the use of the right of property, and therefore essentially unjust.

The rules which determine the distribution of *property* at the death of the proprietor; the laws respecting contracts by which exchanges are made; the conveyances either of property, or of the right to use it, for a given time; and the regulations necessary to prevent, in the use of property, the right of another from being injured; such are the objects of civil law.

In these laws, therefore, nothing ought to be arbitrary; all should tend, not to the greatest utility of the society (which is a vague principle, and the fruitful source of bad laws) but to the support of the  
enjoyment

enjoyment of natural rights.—In a state of nature the property of a father (the fruit of his industry and labour) ought to be equally divided among his children; and if one of the children die without posterity, the father alone has a right over his inheritance. This principle is sufficient to regulate the order of succession in the social state. It requires only to refer any property (according as the hereditary lineage is known or not) to the nearest stock or stocks which subsist, and of which there are descendants; and then to distribute the property according to the natural order\*.—But which children respect the father, and which the mother only †? If in answering this question we would consult reason alone, and not attend to prejudice of any kind; if we would allow that woman, equal in every respect to man, ought to enjoy absolutely

\* For a note to come in here, see the Appendix:

† *Mais quels sont les enfans d'un homme, d'une femme?*  
—Original.

the same rights ; and if we recollect to what strict bounds the right of society over the liberty of individuals ought to be confined ; we shall easily find what laws respecting marriage, and respecting the rights of children born out of wedlock, will be most conformable to justice, and best calculated to fulfil the primitive object of every political association.—We shall find that in this, as in every other case, nothing should be arbitrary ; nothing should depend upon the constitution, the climate, the customs, and the opinions of a people.

The right of property in any individual is nothing more than the right of using freely whatever belongs to him. We cannot consider the right of making wills (that is, of having a power always revocable to dispose of what we possess at the moment when we cease to possess it) as a consequence of the right of property. There should therefore be no wills ; none even of those disposals of property, which prescribe, for an indefinite time, the form

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of



of the property, and the use to be made of it. Every foundation, every property belonging to a corporation, or to a community, should be in the disposal of the state, both as to the manner of enjoying and using it.

The right of property being derived from nature, fictitious property ought only to be the representative of real property; and society ought not to create any such arbitrarily, as it does in the privileges of bookfellers, and in the arts; as well as in the rights of hunting, erections upon waters \*, and fishing.—By natural right, every proprietor is equally entitled to hunt upon his own estate; the privilege of fishing equally belongs to all those whose estates are upon the borders of rivers, and those who have a right to pass along the river; and erections upon waters belong to the proprietors collectively, because no individual can enjoy them

\* The original word is *Ufine*. — *Ducange* says, “*Ufina, Uftrina, vel officina quævis ad aquas exstructa, vulgo Ufine.*”—Note of the Translator.

separately

separately without injuring the exercise of the property of others.

From the same source we see arises the necessity of laws of *police*; that is, of regulations to which proprietors ought to be subjected, whose habitations and properties touch and run into one another; in order that the free enjoyment of the rights of any individual, may not injure the rights, the safety, the health, or the happiness of his neighbours.

All *hereditary* distinctions, if they have any civil effect and confer any right, and all personal prerogatives, if they are not the necessary consequence of exercising a public function, are a diminution of the natural rights of other men; a proceeding contrary to the primitive end of society, and of consequence a real injustice.

—It is thus, that by never departing from the principles of equity, and by conforming ourselves to the object for which society was instituted, that we shall arrive at a simple legislation, deduced entirely from the principles of universal

reason; and that we shall destroy that complication of laws, which is none of the least plagues of mankind.

The right which society has of *punishing* the guilty, should be regarded as a condition implied in the advantages which society has procured them; for without this, the right would be confined like that of war, to that which is strictly necessary to deprive an enemy of the means of committing injuries.—Punishments are not lawful, if they exceed that which is necessary to counteract those motives to commit crimes prevailing in the majority of individuals; and they ought as much as possible to be inflicted upon the same passions, that induced the crime. Lastly, they ought to be proportioned to the crimes; that is, they ought to be increased or diminished in proportion to the injury they occasion to the individual who is their victim, or to the interest that society has to suppress the crime.

But



But it should not be forgot that the *certainty* of punishment makes a stronger impresson upon the man who is tempted to the commission of a crime, and is more likely to operate as a preventive ; than the rigour of laws and the severity of punishment.

The form upon these occasions should be such, that every man of coolness and endowed with reason should say : “ I  
“ consent to submit myself to a legisla-  
“ ture, which takes every possible pre-  
“ caution to put it out of my power to  
“ commit a crime against another ; which,  
“ if I am accused unjustly, exposes me  
“ to no material danger, restraint, or wan-  
“ ton privation ; and which, if I am  
“ guilty, exposes me to no treatment,  
“ but what I now feel to be just.”

Let the *accused* then be treated with the same humanity, the same regard that he would be entitled to, if his innocence were proved.—Let him not be deprived of his liberty, except when the crime of which he is accused must be punished more se-

verely than by banishment; and even in this case, if he is merely suspected, let him be only summoned and obliged to a fixed residence so as to be watched; let him be taken into custody only when he attempts to make his escape: In any other case let him not be committed to prison, till the evidence brought against him be sufficient to prove his guilt (provided he shall not afterwards set it aside).

To take away from a criminal all hope of escaping from the pursuit of the laws, and to place the citizens out of the reach of revenge, let a public accuser only be charged with criminal prosecutions: but let the law also allow to the accused, who is poor and destitute of support, the assistance of a public pleader; without, at the same time, depriving him of the liberty of procuring other helps.

Let a witness who has been guilty of perjury be liable to no penalty, if he retract his evidence before the execution of the sentence.

During

During every trial, let the accused be permitted to bring proofs of his innocence.—Let the trial be absolutely public, and the proceedings be printed at the expence of the state at a certain time, previous to the final decision \*.

Let it be established by law what evidence is sufficient to condemn a culprit; lest the judges, in some cases, should be misled by appearances: but let this evidence not be regarded as sufficient, if it appears otherwise in the opinion of the judges, lest the innocent should be the victim either of chance, which might assemble such evidence against him; or of the errors which the legislator might have made in considering this evidence as always furnishing a full conviction.

\* M. Turgot believed that the printing of every trial was the surest way to save the citizens from the danger, and the judges from the misfortune or crime of an unjust condemnation. This expence he found upon calculation to be too inconsiderable to form a sufficient motive for depriving the public of this useful benefit.



Let the law determine what is really criminal ; let it point out with precision every species of crime, and the punishment that should be annexed to it ; without leaving any thing to be pronounced by the court, respecting the qualification of actions, or the extent of the punishment, but simply the matter of fact.

Let the tribunal which decides be formed of enlightened men, chosen from the class of citizens that is most exempt from popular prejudices ; lest the nature of the crime, or the impression it may have upon their minds, should induce them to condemn an innocent person.— Let the tribunal be appropriated to this function only ; and let it not be formed of perpetual members, that their interests as a body, and an *esprit de corps*, may not mislead their judgment. The interest that all have that no crime should go unpunished, renders these two conditions necessary ; and we ought to avoid equally both the ignorance and the prejudices of  
juries,

juries, called by chance to important duties; and the indifference and spirit of routine of judges, who make their office a trade.—Let the tribunal be so numerous that, without assigning any reason, a sufficient number of challenges may be made to place the accused out of the power of secret influence; and, at the same time, let the members that constitute the tribunal be chosen with such care, that the challenges may not give to the culprit the hope of impunity.—Let there be required, in order to condemn a criminal, a very considerable majority; and let the accused be acquitted, if the majority be small; without expecting the judges to alter their opinion, which ought to be influenced by truth alone.

If, in spite of all these precautions, there should exist any doubt, let it be always interpreted in favour of the accused; and let the execution of severe punishment, and especially that of death (if it can ever be a just punishment), not take  
place

place till it has obtained the consent of the supreme magistrate; in order to leave the last resource to oppressed innocence.

To maintain the free enjoyment of natural rights against fraud and violence; to subject to legal forms the bargains that men may legitimately make with one another; to establish regular modes of acquiring, of transmitting, and of receiving property; to subject to common rules such actions as in the social state the support of the rights of each individual require should be subjected to them; these are the limits of the rights of society over individuals. — Other laws can have no other object, than to regulate the *manner* in which the public authority should exercise its functions. — Religion ought no more to be the object of laws than our modes of living, or our modes of dress.

Society by drawing men to one another, increases the influence of every individual over the happiness of another; and



and though, in the strict sense of the word, duties may be reduced to the simple one of justice (that is, of not violating any of the natural rights of another man), still there should arise from this influence duties of another nature, which consist in regulating our conduct so as to contribute to the happiness of others.—The recompence of these virtues is to be found in our own hearts, and in the benevolence of those around us.—Few men are called to public virtues that require great sacrifices. In a state governed by wise laws such virtues are seldom necessary ; and in other states they are still more seldom productive of any benefit. They are domestic virtues, and such as become all men, and which influence the well-being of those with whom we have particular ties ; which if they were generally practised, would contribute most to the general happiness of an extensive society.

But these private virtues, which include

clude what are called *morals*, have not been practised generally by any nation. They are incompatible with domestic slavery, and the outrages to human nature, that necessarily follow from it; they are incompatible with the savage contempt for foreign nations; and, in one word, with the customs and spirit of antiquity. It will be equally fruitless to search for them among the savage and superstitious nations which have succeeded the Romans, or among the enslaved nations of Asia. They are still rare among ourselves, who have added the corruption arising from a mercantile spirit, to the disgraceful remains of the prejudices of our ancestors.

How comes it then that good morals have never existed with any people?—It is that there have never existed good *laws*; it is that laws have always flattered, instead of suppressing the vices of humanity; it is that, being made at the mere  
caprice

caprice of the powerful, laws have ever consecrated the tyranny of husbands over their wives, of fathers over their children, of masters over their slaves, of the rich over the poor, of the great over the little, or of the populace over the citizens. Faithful interpreters of vanity, they have divided men into ranks and classes, in opposition to nature which tends to unite them. Every where they have lent their aid to support imposture and monopoly, whose business it is to stifle honest and peaceable industry. Every where they have violated by criminal laws the rights of humanity; by civil laws, the rights of property; and by the laws of taxation and of executive power, the rights of liberty. Every where their complication, as well as their unjust provisions, have tended to excite fraud; and to create opposite interests, and make men enemies to one another. Every where they have countenanced inequality of fortunes, which plunges a small part of the citizens  
in



in corruption, in order to consign the rest to abjectness and misery.

Let us only suppose the code of nature and reason to be substituted, in the place of the codes of legislation that at present subsist; and every thing must necessarily be changed.—Laws respecting marriage and succession being more conformed to nature, would tend to promote peace in families, and to divide fortunes with more equality. The liberty of commerce and of industry would also favour this more equal distribution; and prevent at the same time, the poorest and the weakest members of society from experiencing the oppression, and groaning under the dependence of rich merchants and privileged artisans. A mode of taxation always simple and free from vexation, would give at once mildness and energy to the minds of a people, at present degraded or disgusted by the perpetual experience of fiscal tyranny. We should then no longer see any of those fortunes

made by farming and banking ; which are the source of luxury and corruption to the man who possesses them, and of degradation to those who envy him, or who sell themselves to his passions. The suppression of those humiliating distinctions between the classes of citizens, which perpetuate wealth and pride to individual families, would prevent one part of society from believing themselves born to submit to the pride and caprice of another, or from thinking it necessary to revenge oppression by fraud. Morals would have the further advantage of destroying that multitude of petty places, which are useless in a well-regulated government ; and which, being obtained by favour, serve only to nourish idleness, intrigue, and the spirit of servility : and corruptions would disappear, because the source from which they spring would be dried up.

It is by wise laws which tend to divide property, that luxury should be attacked.

Luxury

Luxury is the offspring of inequalities of fortune, and must necessarily result from them. Sumptuary laws are unjust, and hurt industry; they are evaded; or else by securing the continuance of wealth in individual families, they tend to perpetuate this inequality, whose consequences are more dangerous than those of luxury.

It was in bad laws that M. Turgot saw the source of bad morals\*; and it was for this reason (though the principles of morality to which he scrupulously conformed himself were very refined) that he showed so much indulgence in his judgments. Whatever was free from the appearance of meanness, hypocrisy, cruelty, contempt for the rights of mankind, or tyranny, easily found favour in his en-

\* The maxim of an ancient writer has frequently been quoted, *quid vanæ sine moribus leges proficiunt?* Few maxims are more unphilosophical, or have been productive of more harm. The contrary maxim is more true, *quid vani sine legibus mores proficiunt?*

lightened



lightened eyes ; he thought the fault more in social institutions, than in men ; and when weaknesses and even vices were joined with estimable qualities or real virtues, he believed that the latter belonged to man, and that the former were foreign to his nature.

The true interest then of the people is to be subjected to a legislation which, while it respects the enjoyment of the rights of mankind, is solely intent upon procuring it ; and which, faithful to the principles of an enlightened reason, seeks only the surest and simplest means of obtaining this end.—Whatever be the form of government to which the people are subjected, a free commerce, an unrestricted industry, a taxation levied directly upon land, civil laws distinguished for their simplicity, criminal laws for their justice and humanity (and which, founded upon the nature of man and of society, and deduced from these principles by reason, ought to be every where the same) ;—

same);—this is what would constitute the welfare of the people, and this might every where produce their happiness and their virtues.

However these principles may have been departed from, it is still the interest of the people to revive them; whatever be their form of government, morals, religion, customs, and opinions. It should therefore be the object of political writers to determine what these laws ought to be, and to discover the means of rendering them as simple and as perfect as possible; instead of considering what laws are calculated for one degree of latitude rather than another; and what institutions are the most proper to exalt certain passions, to favour the interests of certain classes of men, to support the different species of tyranny, and to perpetuate prejudices more or less absurd.

If laws were made upon these principles, the subjects of a monarchy, in spite of a few individual abuses of power, would

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in reality be much more free than the subjects of pretended republican governments, who make boast of their liberty.—If we examine what are called free governments, we shall in effect find men subjected there to a multitude of restraints, which they intimately feel and groan under ; but against which they do not exclaim, because not entering into the idea of slavery, which their prejudices lead them to form. If we still farther consider the countries where even the appearance of political liberty does not exist, we shall find that the greater part of the vexations of which they complain, spring from defective legislation, and not from the privation of liberty.—If just laws were established in these countries, and consecrated by common consent, as the only laws conformable to nature and reason, such laws would be respected. To prove this, we need only turn our eyes to that multiplicity of absurd laws which have debased and tor-



mented mankind, and every one of which have been instituted from motives founded upon popular error.—With simple laws we should have little to fear from a government which would become almost inactive, as it would have surrendered to other hands the regulation and controul of every thing. Thus aristocracy, which is every where so powerful, and which is the offspring of inequality of fortune, would no longer be formidable. Every indirect mode of oppression would be destroyed; direct and avowed abuses of power would seldom be experienced, and would affect merely a few individuals, and, in short, would only prevail in extraordinary emergencies\*.

\* It would seldom be the interest of a prince to abuse his power, and he only is capable of doing it directly, in a monarchy. This interest may be greater in the ministers than in the king, and in the grandees or subaltern agents of government greater than in the ministers: but neither the one nor the other of the latter can exercise any but an indirect oppression.

If

If we consider the similarity of one people to another, we may assert, that national interest cannot be concerned in those cases where these interests are said to be opposite. Indeed, if the heads of a nation could derive real advantage from the subjugation of another nation, it is in effect impossible that this advantage should extend to the whole body of the people.

—The more a people shall be surrounded with rich, powerful, and industrious neighbours, the more readily it will find among them the supply of its wants, and the encouragement of its industry. It would doubtless be obliged to cultivate no other commodities than such as were best adapted to the nature of its soil, and to practice only such kind of industry as could resist competition; but this, instead of being a disadvantage, would, on the contrary, be a general benefit.—Freedom of foreign commerce is the only way by which we can place commerce

out of the power of monopoly. It is of equal importance that in the sale of our commodities foreign competition should render us independent of national merchants ; and that this same competition, by supplying us with foreign merchandize, should protect us from the avidity of our own manufacturers.—Even if other nations should prohibit our commodities, and shut their ports against us, it would still be our interest to let our ports remain open ; a reciprocity of prohibitions serving no other purpose than to deprive us of foreign succour, and to oblige us to pay dearer for our wants.—It is for the common interest of nations to be well-governed in their transactions with each other, to be as just in their dealings with foreigners as in dealings among themselves, and to preserve peace with neighbouring powers.—Wars of vanity, ambition, and commerce, are equally fruitless. It can never be the interest of one nation to attack another, to restrict the liberty of  
another,



another, or to monopolize one branch of commerce, to the exclusion of its neighbour. This may be considered as a general maxim, in the same sense as the interest of a nation is said to be in unison with the common interest of every individual, and as the real interest of every individual differs not from the common interest of society. The more good laws prevail in a nation, the more seldom does it experience war. Those are bad laws which produce both national hatred and animosity, and the restless and perturbed passions which have possessed so many nations.

It will not appear astonishing that ideas so simple and so natural should have remained so long in obscurity, if we consider in how few countries, since the commencement of history, mankind have cultivated their reason; and how recent is the period since any have been permitted to cultivate it freely. The method of arriving at precise truths by the analysis of

our ideas, was not applied even to the mathematics till the last century : and it was about the end of the last and the beginning of the present century that it was extended to every branch of knowledge, and diffused itself through almost all the nations of Europe.—But it will appear perhaps still more astonishing, that the greater part of these truths of political œconomy have not been adopted by every mind at the moment in which they have been proposed. The fault may doubtless, to a certain degree, be attributed to the interest and the passions of men ; but this is not a sufficient reason. The men who have a temporary interest in combating these truths, do not form the most numerous part of society, nor the part which has most influence over the general opinion.—What then is the cause that those simple and important truths have hitherto made so little progress ?

The majority, from the defect of *education*, or from not having accustomed themselves to a habit of thinking, judge  
in

in no case for themselves, but receive all their opinions from another. To judge for himself, it is necessary that a man should be able to analyze the propositions which he examines, and the arguments by which they are supported; a work that requires time, labour, and in almost all questions certain preliminary studies. In the science of natural philosophy, a man readily allows his ignorance; he acknowledges that to understand it requires considerable study; and being acquainted with those who have the reputation of being informed upon the subject, to them he refers himself; and it is enough, that a few enlightened men agree upon any philosophical truth, for the rest to believe and to profess it.—It is not so in the subject of political œconomy. Here every man thinks himself competent to judge: He cannot imagine that a science, which merely employs the common terms of language, can require investigation: He confounds the social right of having an opinion upon whatever interests society, with



with that of pronouncing upon the truth of a proposition, a right to which information only can entitle him: He is desirous of judging, and he deceives himself\*.

The only source of public happiness is the possession of truths to which the order of society may be conformed. It is therefore useful, and even necessary, to increase and especially to diffuse knowledge. In

\* M. Turgot often said, that if an assembly of states, a company of magistrates, or a body of prelates and doctors, should be desirous of judging for themselves in questions of astronomy and natural philosophy, and should believe themselves entitled to decide upon them; they would as often deceive themselves, as upon subjects of government, commerce, legislation, &c. &c.—He might have cited more than one instance of it: at this very moment the history of magnetism or bletonism equally prove to what a degree opinion may be misled, when the ignorant cease to trust to the learned in the subject of natural philosophy. [N. B. The author refers here to the favourers of those who pretend to skill in animal magnetism; and to the patrons of Bleton, who affirmed, that he had the peculiar power of discovering springs of water which lay underneath him, though concealed from view at great depths in the earth.—Additional note by the Translator.]

a nation, where the majority of citizens were truly enlightened, and free from prejudice, it is impossible that any laws but such as are wise and just should be established; and even a nation which derived its laws from the genius of a superior man, could not long remain in ignorance. The majority of men, obliged, in order to procure a livelihood, to follow a profession which engrossed all their time, would doubtless be able to employ but a very small portion of it in acquiring information; but it is easy to perceive that if the laws were good, if they condemned no class of citizens to humiliating circumstances, and favoured the more equal distribution of property and riches, the number of poor would be less, and the time that each family might devote to the business of education would be less restricted.

In considering the degree of physical, moral, and political information, that it would be eligible to give to every man, and that would be sufficient for the common

mon practice of life, that should also be attainable by minds the least disposed to study, and should develop the germ of talents wherever nature has bestowed it, and that should serve to diminish not only the inequality among men of different classes, but even the evil consequences both of natural inequality, and of inequality of information; in considering this (I say) M. Turgot observed, that the obstacle that opposed itself to the universal attainment of this degree of knowledge, resulted not from nature, but from our own arbitrary institutions.

If we were to teach our children nothing but truths, and to talk with them only of what they could understand, there would scarcely be any more false thinkers. — We should more easily learn to read and write a language correctly, if orthography answered exactly to pronunciation \*. — If weights and measures were every

\* M. Turgot had formed a complete list of all the sounds of language, to each of which he proposed to  
fix



every where the same, and their divisions and subdivisions were formed after a simple and commodious method, besides the advantage which commerce would derive from it, other advantages would result from the ease with which we should acquire just and accurate ideas, upon a subject of importance to the whole conduct of life.—A morality founded upon the nature of man, and upon reason, where instruction would begin by the analysis and the developement of moral ideas, would find an easy access to every understanding.—If laws were the simple consequences of the general principles of natural right, almost every man would acquire a competent knowledge for the regulation of his conduct; not only because the laws would be more simple, would

fix an alphabetical character. As all the shades of pronunciation entered into this list, he had carried it to at least thirty-eight characters, by means of which we might have learned to read and write with great facility. This work has not been found among his papers.

embrace

embrace fewer objects, and be written in a more intelligible style, but because also, by being connected with one another, and being deduced from the same principles, they would more easily be engraved upon the memory\*.—In fine, if more philosophy and system was introduced into the science of natural philosophy, and into its application to the arts, it is obvious with

\* It is a discouraging consideration, that in every nation of Europe men are subjected to a multiplicity of civil and political laws which they do not understand. England is not exempted from the general misfortune. 1. In its criminal laws all that does not relate to actual process, is as complicated and as obscure as in any other nation. 2. Its civil laws are a *chef-d'œuvre* of juridical subtlety, and prove how defective this boasted constitution is, which has not even thought of reforming this abuse. 3. Its laws of commerce, manufactures, and finance, do not fall short, in complication and irrationality, of those of any nation upon earth. 4. Its political legislation is not exempt from this defect; and the late contest respecting the legality of the Westminster election (that is, respecting a subject the most important to the liberty of the people) is a striking proof of it.

how

how much greater facility their elements would be acquired.—Since then a *public education*, truly worthy of the name, is not a chimera, the care of establishing and of perfecting it, ought to be one of the first duties of those who guide a nation ; and they ought above all to be cautious of not abandoning it to the management of priests, whose direct influence over the morals of the people is incompatible with the good order of society.

M. Turgot considered as of great importance every method of simplifying and rendering more easy the operations of the mind, whatever they might be. It is impossible to destroy inequality of intellect and of information among the individuals of the human species ; for it is the result of nature and of the state of society, and to stop the efforts of superior minds would be hurtful : but (and this is the end that we should propose to ourselves in society) it is possible so to manage, as that each man, being instructed in whatever he ought to know, and being preserved



served from errors by education and sheltered from the frauds of every species of imposture ; superiority of information and of talents shall be an advantage to the man who possesses it, without being the means of subjecting others to a dependence upon him, or of rendering them the victims of his cunning.—We shall best arrive at this end by facilitating instruction by simple and perspicuous methods, and by creating and strengthening the habit of receiving it, and by adopting clear ideas. Justness of thinking is all that would then be requisite to prevent one man from having an advantage over another in the common functions of life ; for justness of thinking is of all qualities that which has most influence upon the detail of conduct, and that which nature has bestowed most equally and universally \*.

Every

\* If we consider that every where without exception, education has consisted, and still in a great measure

Every obstacle to the progress of knowledge is an evil: let the *press* therefore be free. The liberty of the press cannot be restricted without restricting the exercise of natural rights.—In reality what is it to print? It is to submit our opinions and our ideas to the inspection of other men. Now what is there in this act contrary to the rights of another? Besides, is not the examination of the opinions and the thoughts of other men a road that leads to truth? Truth is a real good, and society can have no right to deprive any individual of the means of acquiring it. The danger of the abuse of the press is nothing.—If general opinions are the subject in question, all truth is useful, and a printed error cannot be dangerous, at least while we have the liberty of attacking it. Are the rights

sure consists, in filling the heads of children with absurdities, we shall acknowledge, that more facts are favourable than contrary to this opinion.

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of individuals, or actions that affect public order, the subject of discussion? It is then that restrictions upon the liberty of the press would be still more tyrannical, since to the general right of publishing our ideas, there is added the right not less sacred of discussing our interests.

Let us therefore examine, by the principles of natural right, in what case the freedom of the press can be criminal; let us then, as we do in other cases, determine in what the crime consists; let us fix upon the means of ascertaining it; and let it be subject to a penalty. But let us no more deprive any citizen of the privilege of the press, than we would deprive him of the use of a valuable instrument, though he may abuse it to perpetrate a crime \*.

M. Turgot

\* M. Turgot had formed the plan of this important part of legislation. In no country of Europe does the liberty of the press really exist; it is every where restricted by laws. In England it is true these laws



M. Turgot regarded the art of printing as the most useful invention to mankind. It is this which secures to them the enjoyment of truth, and those valuable advantages which every succeeding generation will derive from the never-ceasing progress of knowledge. Wherever the freedom of the press shall be established, truth will be completed by triumphing over error, and abuses will disappear in the end. Great injuries to individuals will be more impracticable, as the general opinion will controul authority wherever it shall be vested;—but in order that its force may be full and properly directed, this opinion should be expressed and public.

laws are obsolete, or rather they are executed arbitrarily; and as the public opinion is in favour of liberty, the decisions of juries are almost always partial to it. From hence results an inconvenience: libels are tolerated beyond just bounds, and this has contributed to diminish, and has nearly destroyed in England the influence of *honour*.

The political principles of M. Turgot went far beyond those which he found prevailing in almost every nation, and the hope of seeing any approach made to them was still more distant. This æra will perhaps one day arrive to every country ; but if the wisdom of governments, or the efforts of enlightened men would hasten this period in different nations, it should not be by the same means : and the first object we should have in view in examining the constitutions, the customs, and the prejudices of different people, should relate to the greater or less facility with which they may be brought to that which is truly right.

*A republican constitution* is the best of all. It is that in which all the rights of man are preserved ; since that of exercising legislative power either by himself, or by his representatives, is one of these rights. M. Turgot often said, *I have never known a truly republican constitution ;*

tion \* ; that is, a country where persons of property had an equal right to concur in the formation of laws, to regulate the constitution of the assemblies which digest and promulgate these laws, to give a sanction to them by their suffrage, and to alter by a regular deliberation the form of every public institution. Wherever these rights do not exist in a legal manner, it is not a republic, but an aristocracy more or less corrupt to which we give the name.— We may regard those govern-

\* M. Turgot died before the conclusion of the war. He was alarmed for the United States of America, on account of the influence of the mercantile spirit and English prejudices, with respect to the constitution of states, taxation, prohibitory laws, exclusive commerce, &c. &c. (See his letter to Dr. Price.) The æra of peace was a critical period for the United States, and it was difficult to foresee the consequences of it. Even at present it is not easy to pronounce respecting the future, since the fate of American liberty is attached to the existence of the hereditary and military aristocracy, which the officers of the army have attempted to establish under the title of the *Order of Cincinnatus*.



ments as the most prejudicial to the general happiness, in which the men who exercise authority have an interest contrary to the general interest; because it is in such governments that men do evil voluntarily. Those forms of government come next, which oppose the most obstacles to knowledge, and in which it requires stronger efforts, and more time, to bend the public opinion to truth; where this public opinion has least power; and where it is most difficult to form and execute a regular plan of reformation.

The right of contributing equally to the formation of laws is doubtless an essential, and inalienable right belonging to every land-holder, and against which no prescription can operate. But in the actual state of society, the exercise of this right would be almost nugatory to the majority of the people; and the free and secure enjoyment of their other rights has a much more extensive influence upon the happiness of almost all the citizens. Besides,

sides, this right has no longer the same importance if we regard the laws, not as the expression of the arbitrary caprice of the majority; but as truths deduced by reason from principles of natural right, and adopted as such by the majority. The only difference therefore is, that in one constitution the consent to these truths is tacit; while in another it is public, and subjected to certain legal and regular forms; thus, instead of the very important advantage of not being subject to the arbitrary caprice of another, we have the advantage of being subject only to enlightened reason, which imposes no laws but such as are useful to the general happiness, and of living under a constitution that can give us a well-grounded hope of seeing such laws established.

In this point of view, *monarchies* possess considerable advantages. 1. A monarchy has not and cannot have any interest in making bad laws, an advantage that does not exist in an *aristocracy*; that

is to say, in any republican government, ancient or modern, on this side the globe.

2. A monarchy may often act in conformity to the opinion of enlightened men, without waiting till it has converted the general opinion; and we may expect from it less resistance to that natural course of things, which tends to render this opinion more and more conformable to truth.

3. In such a constitution we may hope that bad laws will be attacked with less reserve, and after a more regular and better combined plan; for none but infant nations, or nations not populous, can have a single legislator that is not a monarch.

—It cannot be said, that it is the interest of a monarch to prohibit the discussion of the principles of legislation, and to prevent the people from knowing what laws would contribute most to the public happiness. In reality, if the happiness of a people depends more upon the wisdom of laws, than upon the form by which they receive their sanction; it is evident,  
that



that the more a monarch shall employ his authority to institute good laws, the more sacred will be his authority, and the less reason will the subjects have to regret a free constitution.

In the *reform of laws* we should avoid,  
1. Whatever may disturb the public tranquillity: 2. Whatever may produce too violent concussions in the situation of a considerable number of citizens: 3. Whatever directly opposes generally received prejudices and customs. Sometimes a law does not produce all the good that it promises, or cannot perhaps be executed while the general opinion opposes it; in which case it is necessary to begin by effecting a change in that opinion.—The laws which prepare the necessary reforms may be different for different people, because these laws are made against prejudices and abuses that are neither similar in their origin nor their consequences; but, the subsequent and ultimate laws for establishing the state of  
things

things most useful to society, should be every where the same, because they ought to be founded upon the nature of man and upon his rights, which are every where the same.—The impossibility of instituting laws rigorously just, restricts the obligation of the legislator, in the instant of reform, to the instituting such laws only, as will occasion a less degree of injustice.

The principles of *external policy* are subject to similar modifications.—If the true interests common to every nation are despised by our neighbours, then the loss of a power which they might employ against us, may be a real advantage to us: and hence, though the preservation of the general tranquillity be the common interest of every nation, we may consider certain revolutions as advantageous.—It is thus that the destruction of the Ottoman empire would be a real benefit to all the nations of Europe, by opening new routes  
to

to commerce, and destroying the monopoly of that of India; as well as a benefit to the whole human race, by drawing along with it the abolition of negro slavery: for the destroying of a tyrannical people, the enemy of its own subjects, is not to attack the common rights of humanity, but to avenge them. Thus what at first sight would seem to be an exception to general principles, is on the contrary merely a means of destroying the obstacles that hinder them from taking place in their entire extent.—It is still therefore true, generally as well as strictly, that there never exists a reason why the sovereign power should either restrict in its own citizens the exercise of their rights, or violate justice with respect to foreigners.

*Fæderate republics* appeared to M. Turgot to be one of the best modes of conciliating the safety of a state, and its power of defence against foreign invasions, with  
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its internal tranquillity ; and particularly of preserving the independence of such states, as are not very extensive. He believed that all neighbouring nations whose language, customs, and modes of living were similar, should form such confederacies ; and he had studied for a long time how to give them a solid and durable consistence, and how to establish them upon fixed principles. As to those which exist in Europe, they were formed by chance, and from the circumstances of the times : but, thanks to the knowledge and spirit which prevail in the present age, America has it in her power to create a form of constitution for these confederacies, more regular, more simple, and better combined ; and this hope had induced M. Turgot to take the more interest in this object, which was almost new in politics.

The only difficulty which suggests itself in the formation of such confederacies, consists in discovering the means of  
establishing

establishing an union that nothing shall be able to change ; and in providing a sufficient force for foreign affairs, that without endangering the independence which the individual states should possess, may be employed with celerity, and so as that the force provided for the defending the whole may not be employed against any part.—If every individual state were to adopt a code of legislation conformable to the principles of natural right, and if (which is a natural consequence) the freedom of commerce and of industry were not restricted by prohibitions, exclusive privileges, and fiscal rights ; a considerable part of these obstacles would be cleared away, and the most dangerous sources of disunion removed.

The mode of surrendering delinquents who, accused of a crime in one country take refuge in another, would also become very simple ; if in conformity to the same principles we were to include in the catalogue of delinquency none but  
real

real crimes. These should be the same every where, and the punishments vary but little; so that no motive of humanity or of justice would oppose itself to the surrender of the accused.—But the state in which they take refuge should offer an asylum to oppressed innocence: The accused therefore ought not to be given up, unless after a strict examination of the crime and of the proofs alleged, the tribunal of the state in which he has sought an asylum, shall think it clear that the accusation is not the fruit of vengeance, interest, or the prejudices of the moment; and unless the evidence brought shall be sufficient for pronouncing the accused guilty in his absence (provided his defence cannot weaken the proofs resulting from it).

Disputes respecting boundaries should be decided by the confederation; and the trifling importance of adding a canton more or less to each republic, would make this decision almost always easy, if



commerce was every where equally free; and if the public expences, raised directly upon land, did not exceed the necessary expences. There would then be no disputes but about lands newly acquired, or alterations occasioned by the current of rivers; and it might be easy to form rules by which the supreme council of the confederated states might decide such questions; so as to leave every land-holder, or assembly of land-holders in each canton, in the case of new possessions, at liberty to unite themselves to such of the neighbouring states as should appear to merit the preference.—The same council might equally decide contests, respecting any loss sustained by one state from public works undertaken for the benefit of another.

The objects which remain to be regulated, are the right of making war and peace; the administration of the military, and the revenue destined to be employed  
for

for the common defence, or the common advantage of the confederation.

It readily appears to be necessary that each state should surrender its right of making *war and peace, and of forming treaties*; leaving this right entirely to the assembly representing the whole confederation. To avoid any inconveniencies resulting from this power, it may be settled, 1. That this assembly shall have no right to declare war, unless by a considerable majority of its members, and only in case of an invasion : 2. That in every other case there must be absolutely a majority, not of the members of this council, but of individual states ; and the representatives shall then be obliged to conform themselves to the will of their electors : 3. The details of the conduct of a war should be always regulated by a plurality of votes in the general assembly.

Treaties should for the same reason be

digested only by the will of a majority of members, except when the question relates to the sacrifice of a territory belonging to one of the confederated states ; a sacrifice which cannot take place without the consent of that state, or the decision of a very great majority of the others.

The *military administration* here is attended with much greater difficulties. We cannot in reality, without endangering the common liberty, make the army dependent upon the supreme council, nor permit each state to form an army according to its pleasure. But these inconveniences may be avoided by very simple precautions. 1. The supreme council should determine the fortifications proper for each state, to be made at the common expence ; but these fortifications should be garrisoned, in time of peace, with the militia of each individual state, each state nominating its officers. 2. There should be no other regular troops in times of peace than these regular militia, formed

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in each state, and destined for these garrisons; but in every canton the citizens that were able to bear arms should form a kind of militia, elect their officers, and assemble voluntarily once a year to learn their exercise. Each state should establish one or more schools of engineering, artillery, and tactics, in which these parts of the military art should be taught to any citizen desirous of learning them, premiums being given to such as distinguished themselves.—By this means almost all the advantages of a standing army would be had, without its dangers; and in the instant of a war each state would find its soldiers and officers ready for furnishing its contingent. The army need not be raised till the declaration of war, and might be disbanded at the moment of peace; the present state of knowledge permitting us to supply practical experience, which is always acquired with danger, by theory, which is accompanied with none. The establishment of arsenals,  
both

both for the army and the marine, might equally be left to the care of each state, the general assembly deciding respecting them ; so that during peace the administration of affairs would rest in each state, but during war every thing would depend upon the supreme council, which (as has already been stated) would have no power of declaring war, but in case of invasion, without the consent of a considerable majority of individual states ; the military authority of this council being thus neither durable nor dangerous.

As to the administration of the *finances*, each state should raise a contribution necessary for its own expences. General expences should be distinguished first into those of peace ; which are annual, and include for instance those of the supreme council, for foreign affairs, for the support of fortifications and magazines, and, lastly, for such general establishments as respect the whole confederacy. The sum necessary to defray these should

be fixed annually; the account of them should be printed, and in the following year it should be determined from this account, by a majority of the states, acting as they should be instructed, whether the sum ought to be increased or diminished; only, in case the states should be numerous, a greater majority should be required to increase, than to diminish it.

War expences must be defrayed by one of the following means; by a competent contribution, by a fund collected before-hand, by paper-money, or by loans.—The first mode would in many cases be insufficient.—The second is attended with the inconvenience of taking out of the general circulation sums that might be useful to it; and the inconvenience could be remedied only in part by lending these sums to individuals, a measure that would occasion losses, and open a source of abuse and disorder.—The resource of multiplying paper-money during the period of  
war



war would be dangerous, unless it were regularly called in upon the establishment of peace; and then it would have exactly the same effect as loans upon annuities, and would be moreover exposed to the danger of losses from want of credit, which is a greater and more unlimited evil than attends the increase of the interest of loans.—Loans, therefore, whether they are redeemable by long or short annuities, are the best mode of providing for extraordinary expences.

It is perhaps impossible to levy contributions in an equitable proportion among the states, unless it be established as a principle by the confederacy, that no tax, under any pretence whatever, shall be instituted, but a direct tax upon the net produce of land (the only one that can be regarded as just). In reality every state would then contribute in proportion to its ability, and this ability would be no longer a secret; and nothing more would be necessary than to appoint fixed

periods to remedy the defects of the assessment.—It is from the prejudices which prevent the exclusive establishment of this mode of taxation, that the troubles spring which at present divide England and Ireland.—We may attribute almost entirely to the same cause, and to bad laws of commerce, the separation of the colonies from England: for in politics, as in every other science, truth and error, and consequently the good and evil that result from them, mix and draw on each other; and one false principle, respecting any one department, is sufficient to spread error and disorder through the whole.

There are, as we have before observed, two ways of counting *votes* in the supreme council of the confederacy; the one by the plurality of deputies, the other by the plurality of cantons.—The first should be adopted in all cases which require discussion and dispatch. In other cases it is necessary to take the majority of cantons; whose deputies should then  
vote

vote according to the instructions of their constituents.

Finally, in order that the deputies, where they are required to vote according to their engagements, may not abuse their power, their electors should have the right of revoking the election, without assigning any reason but its own will; subject only to certain forms, and especially that of having a great majority to decide it, in order that such revocations might be very rare, as they weaken the power and union of the confederate body.—This law would serve at the same time to deprive the supreme council of the dangerous right of prolonging the duration of war.

Such were the principal views of M. Turgot respecting this object; and we see how strictly they were connected with the rest of his principles, and how very little the constitution of a great republican state differs from that of a confederate republic; so little, that, if we except the limited power of the supreme coun-



cil, it will be found to resemble very nearly the form of government that takes place in every great nation.\*.

But is it possible that mankind should ever conform its general conduct to the views dictated by sound reason?—M. Turgot not only hoped it, but he regarded an indefinite and ever-increasing *perfectibility* as one of the distinguishing qualities of the human species; and held its consequences as infallible.—The art of printing has doubtless advanced its progress, and even rendered all retrogression impossible; but even this invention was a consequence of habits of reading, diffused through a considerable number of nations. The press, at present, is not the only mode of multiplying copies; and if this art was to be lost, other inventions would necessarily supply its place.—This

\* See above, at c. vi. p. 193, &c. his project for municipalities.

perfecti-

perfectibility appeared to M. Turgot to belong both to human nature in general, and to every individual in particular. He believed, for example, that the improvement of natural philosophy, education, and of method in the sciences, or the discovery of new methods, would contribute to the perfecting of organization ; and render men capable of retaining more ideas in their memory, or multiplying their combinations. He believed also that the moral faculty was equally capable of improvement.

According to these principles, every useful truth will be one day generally known, and universally adopted. Old errors will by degrees be annihilated, and replaced by new truths. This progress, always advancing from age to age, has no bounds, at least no definite bounds, ascertainable by the actual state of knowledge.

M. Turgot was convinced that the perfection of the regulations of society would

would necessarily be accompanied with an equal improvement in morals; and that men would become more virtuous as they were more enlightened.—He wished therefore, instead of endeavouring to accommodate human virtues to prejudice, and supporting them by enthusiasm and extravagant principles; that we would content ourselves with convincing men by reason, as well as sentiment, that their interest ought to lead them to the practice of mild and peaceful virtues; and that their own happiness is inseparably connected with that of other men.—The fanaticism of liberty and of patriotism appeared no virtue in his eyes; and where these sentiments were sincere, he regarded them as the respectable errors of strong and elevated minds, which it was necessary to enlighten rather than to exalt. He was apprehensive that if these virtues were subjected to a strict and philosophical analysis, they might be found to belong to pride, and a desire of domineering  
over



over others ; that the love of liberty was the love of superiority over their fellow-citizens, and the love of their country a desire to profit by its grandeur : and he proved this, by showing of how little consequence it was to the majority of men, whether they had any influence in public affairs, or belonged to a nation that had considerable dominion.

He doubted not that every age, by the progress of agriculture, and of the arts and sciences, would multiply the sources of enjoyment for every class of men, diminish natural evils, and enable us either to prevent or elude many of the plagues which threaten them. When nations tend to approach each other, whatever the earth produces or industry creates, in different countries, will be a common blessing to mankind : every nation would arrive at the acknowledgment of the same principles, the use of the same knowledge, and unite together to advance the progress of reason and the common happiness.

M. Turgot

M. Turgot perceived that the fundamental principles of legislation and executive government had already opened the eyes of a few individuals to the light of truth. He saw that the object and the rights of society, the duties of those who govern, and the rights of the citizens who compose it, had been ascertained. —But he was far from thinking that a code of legislation upon these principles, for obtaining this object, and preserving these rights, was brought to the last degree of perfection : time, and the progress of knowledge, could alone bring it, not indeed to attain this point, but continually to advance towards it. The day he hoped would arrive, when, convinced of the absurdity of opposing nation to nation, power to power, passion to passion, and vice to vice, men would hearken to what reason dictated for the common happiness of humanity. Why should not politics, founded like every other science upon facts and argument, improve in proportion

proportion as we apply to it observations more accurate and refined, and a mode of reasoning more precise, more deep, and more just? Why should we presume in this science to fix the degree of improvement to arise from the efforts of superior minds, strengthened by a better education, early exercised in associations of ideas more various and more extensive, and accustomed to more general and less complicated modes of practice?—Let us be cautious not to despair of the fate of the human race. Let us dare, in the immensity of ages that will succeed us, to foresee a knowledge and a happiness of which we can only form a vague and undetermined idea. Let us count upon the perfectibility with which nature has endowed us, upon the strength of the human genius, from which long experience gives us a right to expect prodigies; and let us console ourselves for not being the living witnesses of that happy period, by the pleasure of predicting and anticipating



ing it, and perhaps by the more sweet satisfaction of having by a few moments accelerated the arrival of this too distant æra.

Thus, so far from believing knowledge fatal to the human race, M. Turgot considered the faculty of acquiring it as the only remedy for human evils, and the real justification of the order (imperfect in our eyes, but becoming every day more and more perfect) which he observed in all human affairs, and in the whole universe as it respected mankind.

History confirmed him in his opinion, Undisturbed by the declamations of the idolizers of antiquity, he examined his own age, and he believed it superior in reason, in knowledge, and even in virtue, to those that had preceded it. *The libertines of the present day*, he often said, *would have been Capuchins a century ago.*

He considered the love of *fame* as a valuable principle, but he observed more than one inconvenience resulting from it.

—If

—If we except what is due to literary works, to improvements in philosophy, and inventions in the arts and sciences, he thought that fame is almost always distributed by caprice. The opinion of the vulgar bestows it with injustice, lavishes it upon those who have the art of seducing them, and refuses it to real talents and real virtues.—In reading history, M. Turgot perceived that historians (of whom posterity is almost always the servile echo), celebrated sometimes tyrant kings, and sometimes oppressive ministers. New evidence sometimes enables us to decypher truth, and to render a tardy justice; but this is more frequently deficient, or error perpetuates itself in spite of it; and thus a love of false glory has led conquerors to commit injustice, or taught a subtle minister the art of acquiring a surreptitious reputation with little expence.—M. Turgot also considered the love of fame as an obstacle to some species of human knowledge. He believed that the  
love

love of study, and the pleasure of reflection, had contributed to important discoveries, as much as the love of fame; and he saw, at the same time, that as long as fame continued to be the chief object in view with the majority of mankind, the researches that demand long observation, and in which important truths can be only the price of investigations continued for several generations, would be necessarily neglected.—But under a legislation more conformable to the will of nature and the laws of reason, where few men would be employed in public affairs, and the acquirement of great fortunes would be more impracticable, and luxury be banished by a more equal distribution of wealth; the exertions of the mind, and useful investigations, would become more general; and we should no longer want to be stimulated to them by the hope of glory, or by literary premiums\*.

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\* M. Turgot regarded academies as he regarded every other establishment that is not essential to the order



It was from the same principle of the perfectibility of the human mind, that M. Turgot regarded no object of study as too trifling, nor any speculation as useless.

Whatever might hereafter lead to the discovery of any one truth, or contribute to form a single link in the whole system of human knowledge, or at any time be capable of any application, appeared to him to merit the attention of mankind. He considered even the occupation, and the habit of cultivating the mind by labour and study, as a real advantage; and as

order of society: He considered them as only productive of a temporary advantage. He thought, however, that academies would be useful as long as the encouragement they gave to the sciences remained necessary; and more especially as long as, from the confined limits of knowledge, and the numerous prejudices that still subsist, such societies were requisite to oppose a barrier to impostors; and he thought also that they should have a sufficient influence over the general opinion, to make this barrier be respected.

a preservative against the vices of idleness.

—The man who wants neither place, fortune, nor consideration, in order to close every day in peace, is little short of being a virtuous man; and M. Turgot was convinced that nature had placed in the heart of every man principles that might lead him to love virtue, and that it was above all things necessary to endeavour to prevent his having too great an interest in being vicious.

## C H A P T E R X.

**T**O have described the opinions and the principles of M. Turgot, is to have painted his character. If we seldom find the character and conduct of men conformable to their principles, it is because they seldom possess the principles which from hypocrisy or vanity they affect to possess; or it is because their principles are prejudices which they have imbibed, and not truths whose proofs they have felt; and that their reason has no share in them.—M. Turgot, on the contrary, had adopted no principle without analyzing it, and without an intimate persuasion of its truth: all his sentiments were consequences of his opinions, and all his actions directed by reason. This explains to us wherefore he was so severe respecting his own moral conduct, and yet so indulgent to the



faults of others, whom he often thought less culpable than our present social institutions: and wherefore it was that of all the crimes of humanity, the abuse of power and the contempt of truth, excited his strongest indignation; (for he considered the knowledge of truth as the foundation of happiness, and the sentiment of benevolence as the fountain of every other virtue :) and wherefore, lastly, he held the diffusion of knowledge by means of good productions, as one of the most important services that could be conferred upon society; and could never forgive those who by restrictions upon the liberty of writing injured the progress of knowledge, nor those who defended in their works sentiments which they could not believe. Impostors, whatever habit and masque they wore, excited in him an aversion mixed with disgust; because in his eyes to deceive men, and to do them a real injury, was the same thing.—This strong conviction of mind, when united to

to courage, produces strength of character ; and we feel how rare a phænomenon it must be. M. Turgot possessed it, and could not help despising the man who possessed it not. Indulgent towards those who gave way, or who surrendered themselves entirely to their disposition for pleasure, he was inexorable when they mixed religious practices with such gratifications ; because this mixture is a proof either of a shameful pusillanimity, or a criminal hypocrisy.—His hatred of the wicked was open and irreconcilable : and he even pretended that honest men only were ever inexorable ; for that knaves knew how to injure and to revenge, but not how to hate.—Satire, if it were true, and had vice and public crimes only for its object, appeared to him a just weapon. He believed that a man might be permitted to conceal his name, for it was not necessary, for a mere display of courage, that an honest man should expose himself to unjust oppression ; and [thus] the most

virtuous man that perhaps ever existed wrote satirical verses.

As he could not dissemble his hatred of the wicked, and his contempt for cowardice and meanness, these sentiments involuntarily painted themselves upon his face, his looks, and upon his whole countenance.—This defect in the command of his outward deportment, resulting from the candour of his soul, contributed as much as his confined education to the timidity and embarrassment that he carried with him into the world. To such a degree did they extend, that he permitted false arguments, and sometimes, though very seldom, bad principles to be advanced in his company, without opposition, and without advancing a word in favour of truth: but he could never silence the features of his face.—As this hatred of the vicious was a consequence of his love of human nature, it never inspired in him injustice or vengeance. It influenced not even his judgments. He praised his most  
inveterate



inveterate enemy, if he did any thing deserving of praise, and defended him against any unjust imputation, allowing him the merit or the good qualities that he really possessed; but he did not think himself obliged, in order to obtain the reputation of a great soul, to betray the truth, nor to spare vice because himself had been the victim of it.

His disinterestedness was such as might be expected from strict justice, an exact estimation of the advantages of wealth, and a true superiority of mind. The disinterestedness which is allied to vanity, and of which men are desirous of making a merit, excited his compassion or his contempt.— Possessing the virtue of humanity in its highest perfection, he exercised it with all the delicacy, and I dare assert with all the refinement, of which it is susceptible. It was his duty to be beneficent, but he was so without ostentation; and he considered this virtue as a weakness, unless by subjecting it to reason it

was made serviceable to the general utility.—All his sentiments were pure ; all his first impulses were mild or courageous ; and his calm soul, replete with candour and justice, offered to the eyes of those who could look at it a spectacle equally delightful and sublime.

The constant agreement between his principles and his conduct, his sentiments and his reason ; the union of steadfast justice with the sweetest humanity, of the most rigorous virtues with the most amiable qualities, of sensibility with firmness of character, of justness with subtlety of thought, of method in reasoning with boldness of ideas, of refined analysis with extensive views, of depth with accuracy of detail ; the uncommon merit of having embraced every thing in his knowledge, and the more uncommon merit still of having introduced into the mighty whole so much clearness and truth ; an immoveable constancy in his opinions, without ever exaggerating them ;

them ; all these qualities, form an assemblage that is perhaps peculiar in the history of man, and which could not have been exhibited but in a peaceable and cultivated nation, and in an enlightened age. —Many individuals have practised great virtues with more eclat, have possessed more brilliant qualities, and discovered in a single line more genius ; but no man perhaps ever displayed a whole so perfect and so imposing. It seems as if his wisdom and his strength of mind, by seconding the happy gifts of nature, had made him not susceptible of any ignorance, weakness, or defect, but what are inseparable from the state of a limited being.

It is in this extraordinary union that we should look both for the source of the little justice that was done to him, and of the hatred that was excited against him. Envy seems to attach itself more closely to that which approaches to perfection, than to that which, though it strikes with astonishment, affords, by a mixture of defects



defects and vices, that consolation of which envy stands in need. We may hope to dazzle the eyes of men and obtain the title of a man of genius, by combating or by flattering popular prejudices with address, and we may hope to cover our actions with the masque of some exaggerated virtue; but the constant practice of virtue that is simple and unostentatious, with a reason always upon the stretch, and always steady in the road of truth; this is what hypocrisy, this is what imposture despair of imitating; and is therefore what they endeavour to stifle and destroy.

To judge properly of M. Turgot, it is necessary to know his whole character. He might have been thought cold, and yet his reason only had preserved him from being very passionate. He was esteemed disdainful, whereas never did man feel a more profound esteem for talents and virtue, or set a higher price upon the efforts of mediocrity, when  
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modest, and usefully employed. He appeared minute; but it was only because he had included every thing in one vast plan, and connected whatever appeared of importance in his eyes by ties that often were invisible to all but himself. He seemed susceptible of prejudice; but it was only because he judged for himself, and because the common opinion had no power over him. He was believed proud; but it was only because he concealed neither the consciousness of his powers, nor the firm conviction of his opinions; and because, feeling how closely they were connected with each other, he would neither abandon them in conversation, nor defend separately any detached part. The particulars of his opinions were indeed not known, and few persons in Europe were ripe for doing justice to them as a system; and as the case could not be compared to that of detached discoveries in a single science, or literary works in actual possession of the public, how could  
persons

persons under the influence of prejudices judge of him with fairness?

It was by these circumstances that a man who never did any thing but what was good, might happen to have many enemies; while his reputation as a virtuous and intrepid citizen, and as one possessed of understanding and extensive knowledge, corresponded among the vulgar to their idea of one of the most extraordinary men that nature ever produced, and of one perhaps who fell the least short of that perfection to which human nature can be raised.

## APPENDIX.





# A P P E N D I X.

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## A R T I C L E I.

*Translation of the Article FOUNDATION, inserted by M. Turgot in the French Encyclopédie; and referred to in the preceding work.*

**F**OUNDATION, (political and natural right). The words *to found, fund, foundation*, apply by a very natural metaphor to every durable and permanent establishment; since the name of an *establishment* is itself derived from the same metaphor.—It is in this sense we say, *foundation of an empire, of a republic*. But we shall not treat in this article of these great objects: since what we must say would relate merely to the first principles of political right, and to the original institution of governments among men.—Lastly, we say *to found a sect, to found an academy, a college, an hospital, a convent, masses, prizes, public sports, &c.* *To found*, in this sense, is to appoint a fund, or sum of money, to be employed

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employed in perpetuity for fulfilling the object proposed by the founder, whether this object relate to divine worship or to the public utility; or whether it be merely to gratify the vanity of the founder, which is often the only true motive, though other pretexts serve as a veil to it.

The formalities necessary for conveying to the persons commissioned to execute the intention of the founder; the property or use of the funds appointed for this purpose; the precautions to be taken to secure the perpetual execution of the engagement entered into by these persons; the indemnifications due to those whom this transfer of property may concern (as, for example, to the sovereign who is for ever deprived of the fine levied upon every change of proprietor); the bounds which policy has wisely been desirous of preserving to the exorbitant multiplication of such liberalities; in short, various other circumstances, either essential or necessary to foundations, have given occasion to different laws, of which the detail does not belong to this article.—Our intention here is only to examine the utility of foundations in general, as they regard the public welfare, or rather to show their inconveniencies. May the following considerations concur with the philosophic spirit of the age, in exciting an aversion to new foundations, and in destroying the remains of that superstitious respect which is entertained for the old!

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1°. A founder is a person who wishes to perpetuate the measures he has planned. Now if we suppose his intentions to be the purest possible, how many reasons are there to induce us to distrust our own opinions? How very easy is it to do evil in pursuit of the very purpose to do good? To foresee with certainty whether an establishment will produce the effect that we promised ourselves from it, and whether it will not produce one exactly the reverse; to discern through the illusion created by some immediate and apparent good, the real evils that a long chain of unknown causes may bring along with them; to discover the real distempers of a society, and to ascend to the origin of them; to distinguish remedies from palliatives; to defend ourselves against the deceptions intended to seduce us; to regard a project strictly and calmly in the midst of that atmosphere of glory with which the applauses of an undiscerning public, and our own enthusiasm, surround it: to do all this, requires a most profound genius, and perhaps the present state of human policy is not sufficiently advanced to give us any hopes of such success. We shall be apt to apply our remedies to individual cases, when the cause of the evil is general; and the influence of the cause may often be increased by the methods taken to oppose its effects.—We have a striking example of this want of management in certain



tain houses destined as an asylum for female penitents. To shew proofs of having been debauched, is a necessary qualification for admission. I am sensible that this precaution must have been designed to prevent the *foundation* being applied to other objects: but does not this alone prove that it is not by such establishments, foreign to the true source of the libertinism, that we should combat it? —What I have said of libertinism will apply equally to poverty. The poor have indisputable claims upon the superfluity of the rich: humanity and religion equally oblige us to relieve our fellow-creatures in misfortune. It is in order to fulfil these indispensable duties, that so many charitiès are established in the Christian world for the relief of every kind of want; that the poor without number are crowded into hospitals, and supported at the gates of the convents by daily distributions. What is the consequence? It is precisely in the countries where these charitable resources most abound, as in Spain, and some parts of Italy, that poverty is more common and more general than any where else. The reason is very obvious, and a thousand travellers have remarked it. To cause a considerable number of men to live gratuitously, is to institute prizes for idleness, and all the disorders which result from it; it is to make the condition of the indolent preferable to that of the industrious; and it is consequently



consequently to diminish to the state the quantity of labour, and of the productions of the earth, of which a part necessarily becomes uncultivated. From hence come frequent famines, an increase of the quantity of misery, and depopulation which is the consequence of it. The race of industrious citizens is displaced by a vile populace, composed of mendicants without fixed habitations, and given up to all sorts of crimes.—To feel the abuse of these ill-applied alms, let us suppose a state so well governed, that a poor person is not to be seen in it (a thing possible doubtless in every country that has colonies to people). The establishment of a gratuitous relief for a certain number of men, would immediately create poor in that state; that is, it would give to a certain number an interest to become poor by abandoning their occupations. From hence would result a void in the labour and wealth of the state, an additional weight of public burthens upon the industrious man, and all the disorders which prevail in the present constitution of societies. It is thus that the purest virtues may mislead those who deliver themselves up without caution to whatever they inspire.—But if pious and respectable plans may disappoint all the hopes that were entertained of them, what must we think of those foundations (and which doubtless are the most numerous) which have had no motive or real object, but the gratification of a frivolous vanity?—I am not afraid to

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assert, that if we compare the advantages and inconveniences of all the foundations which at present exist in Europe, there is perhaps not one that will stand the test of an enlightened policy.

2. But whatever may be the utility of a *foundation*, it carries in itself an irremediable defect, inseparable from its nature; namely, the impossibility of securing its execution.— Founders grossly deceive themselves, if they imagine that their zeal will communicate itself from age to age, to the persons destined to perpetuate their plans. If it even animates them for a short time, there is no community that does not lose in the end the spirit it set out with. There is no sentiment that is not blunted by custom, and a familiarity with the objects which excite it. What mixed sensations of horror and dejection, of commiseration for human nature, and pity for the suffering objects, does not every man experience, when he first enters into the wards of an hospital. Let him however open his eyes, and what does he see? In this very place, in the midst of this assemblage of human misery, the persons appointed to succour the distressed objects, walk about with a careless and indifferent air; they distribute mechanically and without feeling, from sick to sick, food and those medicines which are often prescribed with a murderous carelessness: their minds are disposed to trifling conversations, and perhaps to the most gay and extravagant ideas: vanity,

vanity, envy, hatred, all the passions of the soul, reign there as well as elsewhere, and are equally intent upon their object, and equally pursue it; the groans and the piercing cries of anguish no more interrupt them, than the murmurs of a stream interrupt an animated conversation. It is scarcely to be conceived, but we have seen the same bed become at once the bed of death and the bed of sensuality. Such are the effects of custom, even upon those objects which are most calculated to move the human heart. It is for this reason no enthusiasm can be kept alive:—and how, without enthusiasm, can the servants of any foundation always execute it with the same exactness? What interest shall balance indolence, that weight attached to human nature, which always tends to retain us in inaction?—The very precaution which the founder has taken to secure to them a constant salary, dispenses them from the necessity of meriting it. Does he appoint superintendants and inspectors to see that the conditions of the foundation are observed? It will be with these inspectors, as with all those who have been appointed for the perpetuating any regulation whatever: if the obstacle has been indolence, the same indolence will operate on the superintendants; if a pecuniary interest, they can easily come in for their share of the profit. The inspectors themselves will require to be inspected; and where will this absurd progression stop?—It is true that canons have



been obliged to be assiduous in their function, by a reduction almost of their whole revenue to the perquisites they receive ; but this precaution can only oblige them to an attendance purely corporal ; and of what use can this be to the other far more important objects of the foundation ?—Thus almost all the ancient foundations have degenerated from their original institution.—The same spirit which gave rise to the first, has then established new ones upon the same, or a different plan which, having degenerated in their turn, have been replaced in like manner by others. The measures are commonly so well taken by founders, in order to place their establishments out of the power of external innovations, that it is usually found more easy, and doubtless more flattering, to found new establishments, than to reform old ones. But by means of these double and triple establishments, the number of useless mouths in society are continually increased, as also the amount of capitals taken out of the general circulation.

There are other foundations which cease to be executed for a different reason, and merely from the lapse of time ; and these are foundations made out of a settled sum or income.—Now there is no species of fixed revenue which has not ultimately lost almost the whole of its value, for two reasons. First, the gradual and successive augmentation of the numeral value affixed to money ; so that those  
who



who originally received a livre \* at the value of twelve ounces of silver, receive no more at this day, in consequence of the same claim, than one of our livres ; being something less in value than the seventy-third part of these twelve ounces. The second reason is, the encreased quantity of the precious metals ; so that three ounces of silver will not now purchase the same commodities that might be bought with one ounce before the discovery of America.—The mischief indeed would not be great, if these foundations were entirely annihilated ; but unfortunately the forms of these institutions still exist, while the conditions of them are no longer fulfilled. For instance, if the revenues of an hospital suffer reduction, the beds of the sick people are retrenched, and it is thought enough to provide for supporting the chaplains.

3. I will suppose that a foundation has originated in indisputable utility ; that sufficient precautions have been taken to prevent its degenerating through indolence and neglect ; and that the nature of its funds puts it out of the reach of the revolutions of time respecting the public wealth ; yet still the immutability which its founders have endeavoured to give it is a considerable inconvenience ; because time produces new revolutions, which cause the utility to vanish that it might have

\* *Livre* is exactly translated by the word *pound*, similar changes having happened to the two terms in the two languages.

originally possessed, and may even render it hurtful.—Society has not always the same wants : the nature and distribution of property, the division between the different orders of people, the opinions, the customs, and the general occupations of a nation, or of its different parts, and the very climate, maladies, and other incidents to which human nature is subject, experience a continual variation : new wants spring up ; others are no longer felt ; the proportion of those which remain is continually changing in society, and with them the utility of foundations destined to supply them, disappears or diminishes.—The wars of Palestine gave rise to numberless foundations, whose utility ceased with those wars. Without mentioning the religious military orders, Europe every where abounds with lazarettos, though the leprosy has not existed in it for a considerable time.—The majority of such establishments long survive their utility : first, because there are always persons who profit by them, and are interested in preserving them ; secondly, because when men are thoroughly convinced of their inutility, it is still very long before it is decided upon to destroy them, and also what are the measures and forms necessary in pulling down these great edifices which have stood for so many ages, and are often attached to other buildings, to which they are afraid of giving a shock, or what use and distribution shall be made of their remains ; thirdly, because



because we are a long time in convincing ourselves, even of their inutility, and frequently allow them time to become injurious before we suspect even that they are useless.

There is every reason to presume that a foundation, however useful it may appear, will become at least useless, if not detrimental, and will continue so for a long time: and is not this enough to stop every founder who has any other end in view than the gratification of his own vanity?

4. I have yet said nothing of the luxury, the edifices, and the pomp, which surround great foundations: our calculation would be very favourable in some cases, if we rated their utility at a hundredth part of their expence.

5. I should merit condemnation, if in writing these observations, my object could be to center the passions of man in the pursuit of interest; to make him insensible to the prosperity and adversity of his fellow-creatures, extinguish in him the spirit of a citizen, and substitute a mean and indolent prudence in the room of that noble passion of being useful to mankind! I would have humanity, and the passion for the public good, produce the same blessings to mankind as the vanity of founders, but in a way more certain and complete, with less expence, and free of the inconveniences of which I complain.—The different wants of society intended to be supplied by means of durable establishments or foundations may be divided into two sorts.—The *first* belong to the whole



society, and result from the interest of each of its parts in particular: such are the general wants of human nature, as food for every individual, good morals, and education for every family: And this interest is more or less urgent respecting different wants; for a man feels more sensibly the necessity of food, than he does that of giving his children a good education. A very little reflection will convince us that this first species of wants is not of a nature to be supplied by foundations, or by any other gratuitous means; and that in this respect the general prosperity ought to be the result of the exertions of every individual for his own interest.—Every man in health ought to procure his subsistence by his labour; for if he were nourished without labour, it must be at the expence of those who labour. What the state owes to each member is the removal of every obstacle that may impede their industry, or disturb the enjoyment of the fruits which are the recompence of it. If such obstacles subsist, partial benefactions will not diminish the *general* poverty, since the cause of it will remain in all its extent.—In like manner every family is bound to educate the children that are born in it; they are all immediately interested in this; and it is only from the exertions of every individual that the general perfection of education can spring. If we amuse ourselves with founding professorships and scholarships in colleges, the advantage will be felt only by a very small number of men, selected at hazard,

hazard, and who perhaps possess not the talents necessary to derive benefit from them. With respect to the nation in general, this will be as a drop of water poured upon the wide ocean; and very trifling advantages will be obtained at a very great expence. Besides, ought we thus to accustom men to ask and receive every kind of assistance from others, and to owe nothing to themselves? This kind of beggary, which extends through all ranks, degrades a people, and substitutes meanness and intrigue in the place of every exalted passion.—When men are powerfully interested in the good you are desirous of procuring them, leave them to their own exertions: this is the great and only principle. Do they appear to exert themselves for it with less ardour than you desire? increase their interest in it. Would you perfect education? propose prizes both to fathers and to children; but let these prizes be within the reach of every one who is capable of meriting them, at least of every order of citizens: let offices and places of every kind be the reward of merit, and lie within the certain prospect of industry. Emulation will then be kindled at once in the bosom of every family: soon the nation will rise above itself: you will have enlightened its understanding; you will have given it morality; you will have done great things; and the expence will be less than it would cost to found a college.

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The *second* class of public wants which men have been desirous of supplying through the medium of foundations, comprehends those which may be considered as accidental; and which being limited to particular times and places, are less immediately comprised in the system of general administration, and therefore may require the succour of individuals. If the business is to remedy the calamities of a famine, or of an epidemical distemper; to provide for the maintenance of certain old men, or certain orphans, or for the preservation of exposed children; or to erect or keep in repair public works, which contribute to the health or convenience of any city; to perfect agriculture or particular manufactures that may languish in any canton; or to recompence the services of any citizen rendered to the town of which he is a member; or to attract thither men distinguished by their talents, &c. In each of these cases, public establishments and foundations are far from being the best means of procuring to mankind these benefits in their greatest possible extent.—The free employment of the revenues of any incorporated body, or the contribution of all its members, in cases where the necessity is urgent and extensive; and, in cases where the interest shall be less pressing or less universally felt, a free association and voluntary subscriptions of a few generous citizens will suffice perfectly for all useful objects; and this mode will have over that of foundations,



foundations, the inestimable advantage that it is not liable to any considerable abuse. As the contribution of each is by the supposition voluntary, the sums collected can never be diverted from their true destination; if they were, the source they proceeded from would cease to flow; and there is no money lost in useless expences, in edifices, or entertainments.—Such an association resembles those we see in commerce; with this difference, that its object is singly the good of the public; and as the fund is employed under the eyes of the subscribers, they are at hand to watch that the employment is productive of the greatest advantage. Eternal resources are not upon this scheme created for temporary necessities; the relief is never applied but to the part of society which suffers, to the branch of commerce which languishes. Does the necessity cease? the liberality is suspended, and its current is turned into channels more immediately useful. Double and triple means are never employed where evident utility always bounds the generosity of the public benefactors: and finally, this method draws no sum of money out of the general circulation; lands are not irrevocably possessed by the indolent; but their produce, in the hands of industrious proprietors, has no limits but those which belong to fertility itself.—Let it not be said that these ideas are chimerical. England, Scotland, and Ireland, are full of similar associations;  
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and have experienced for years their happy effects. What exists in England may exist in France: it would be idle to say that the English have the exclusive monopoly of being citizens.—Even in this country there are certain provinces, in which examples of these associations prove their possibility. I will particularly mention the town of Bayeux, the inhabitants of which have associated to banish from their town the trade of beggars; and in this they have succeeded, by furnishing employment to those that can work, and alms to those that cannot work. This excellent example deserves to be held up to the imitation of every town in the kingdom; nothing will be more easy, if once we undertake it in earnest, than to direct the emulation and turn of the French nation, so much alive to honour, and so susceptible of the impressions which government shall be seriously and skilfully willing to make, to objects of a general and infallible utility.

6. These reflections will induce us to applaud the judicious restrictions put by the king, in his edict of 1749, upon the right of instituting new foundations. Let us add, that they remove every doubt respecting the incontestible right which government in civil affairs, and which government and the church in ecclesiastical affairs, have to dispose of old foundations, to direct their application to new objects, or (which is better) wholly to suppress them. The general utility is the  
supreme



supreme law ; and ought not to be counter-acted either by a superstitious regard of what has been stiled the intention of the founder, narrow and uninformed individuals having no right to bind down by their capricious decisions, generations yet unborn ; nor yet by the fear of infringing the pretended right of certain bodies, particular bodies in the state having no right contrary to that of the whole. All *citizens* indeed have their peculiar rights, which must be held sacred even by the society at large ; they themselves exist independently of the society ; they are the necessary elements of it ; and they do not enter into it, except to place themselves with all their rights, under the protection of the very laws to which they sacrifice their liberty. But no particular *bodies* of men thus exist by themselves, or for themselves ; they were formed for the public advantage ; and they should cease, the moment they cease to be useful.—No human production then is made for immortality ; and since foundations, if continually multiplied by vanity, would at length swallow up all private funds and property, it is necessary that a power should exist adequate to their destruction. If all the men that have existed had each had a sepulchre, it would clearly have been necessary to destroy these sterile monuments to find lands for cultivation, and to disturb the ashes of the dead to provide for the subsistence of the living.

## ARTICLE



## ARTICLE II\*.

*Respecting the change of indirect taxes upon consumption, &c. into a direct tax upon the landed interest.*

**N**O indirect tax is in reality paid by the whole class of properties. One affects only a certain class of men or of property, while another falls only upon a particular canton; and it will therefore be necessary first to calculate what each estate actually pays to the tax that is meant to be suppressed; and having compounded this amount with an estimate of the original *net produce*, a new estimate will be obtained to which the new territorial impost (introduced in the room of the old tax) must be proportioned.—Even this operation would be unjust, if one indirect tax only was abolished and many others remained, for it would be possible that among those which remained, there might be some that would not at all affect the property upon which the suppressed tax was re-levied, and thus an injustice would have been introduced by the preceding measure, of relieving some properties at the expence of others.

\* This article, though particularly important, is withdrawn from the body of the work, that those who are interested in studying it may find it separate, and where it does not interrupt other objects.—Note of the Translator.

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There are two ways only of remedying the evil : first, by making a calculation in the manner mentioned, of all the indirect taxes, as if they were all to be suppressed at once ; and learning from thence what is the real *net produce* of each property, what each contributes to the taxes in general, what it would pay after the suppression of the tax to be reformed ; and then assessing the tax that is to be substituted so as to preserve the greatest possible equality.—The second method consists in permitting at first the present inequalities to subsist, which at least would be no new injustice ; and taxing each property exactly in the same proportion as it had hitherto been, affording it thereby no advantage but that of relieving it from the expences of collection. Time, by discovering the errors of this second operation, would establish justice, but by slower degrees ; for all that can be said of this method in its first stages is, that it forms only a less injustice than the indirect tax \*.

The first method requires the most abilities in the minister who should wish to follow it ; and perhaps there has never existed but one man who was capable of executing it well : but it is much more just in itself, and the errors to which it is liable would be much less considerable than those which are in the

\* Note intended in the original for this place, will be found at the close of the article.

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second ;



second ;—the application of which second would become very difficult, if a certain portion of the tax should affect a set of properties, distinguished neither by local situation, nature of soil, nor by any quality inherent in the land itself ; such as the duties upon the entry of goods into towns, and the taxes levied upon a particular class of citizens.—The estimate of the net produce by which the tax ought to be proportioned, being formed as we have already observed, by adding to the real produce the benefits resulting from the reduction of the indirect taxes ; from hence a new difficulty will result. A part of the indirect taxes being counted among the expences of cultivation, if the estates are farmed out, the proprietor's share in these benefits becomes of less amount. This part, therefore, of the net produce abandoned to the farmer, ought to make part of the new tax ; and as the farmer ought to pay a sum equal to the value of the net produce which he derives from the suppression of the indirect taxes, this sum ought to be raised upon him, in diminution of that exacted from the proprietor.

The fall of wages and incomes, of the profits of commerce, and of the interest of money, would be a consequence of this direct territorial tax.—Appointments also, pensions, and emoluments for certain functions determined by law, should be looked upon as fixed salaries, and therefore of course should experience the same fall ; or, which amounts to the same thing, they ought to be reduced in proportion



tion to the relief they derive from the suppression of the indirect taxes.—And it follows from the same principle, that the irredeemable annuities due from government, ought to be subjected to the same diminution\*.

This explanation, though incomplete, will serve to shew that the transformation of all the indirect taxes into one direct territorial tax is possible by a single operation, but that at the same time it would be the part of prudence to effect it by degrees.—It is indeed obvious, that if the change was effected at once, a fall of wages, of profits in commerce, and of interest of money, sufficient to indemnify the proprietors for the new tax with which they would be burthened, could not so immediately take place, as to prevent their feeling a very considerable, though transient, grievance.

Whatever sagacity we may suppose a minister to possess, whatever precision may be introduced into the detail of this operation, it is impossible that errors should not glide into it.—If the whole operation be executed at once, these errors may increase, and produce a surcharge upon a considerable number of

\* If irredeemable annuities due from individuals rest upon lands, they form a part of the net produce. Annuities payable at certain periods, ought to be subjected to the tax, if the creditor foregoes his privileges. Annuities redeemable at pleasure ought to be exempted: but as the fall of interest would be slower than the operation upon the taxes, annuities of this last description might for some years only be subjected to a drawback.

citizens truly burthenfome. There is no danger of this inconvenience when the change is effected gradually; and even if errors were to be apprehended, they might be remedied by the momentary facrifice of a part of the value of the tax; a facrifice that would be impoffible, if it operated at once upon the whole of the taxes.—If this fucceffive transformation of all taxes into one territorial tax be attended with difficulties, it is alfo the only reform that can be productive of lafting benefit.

With the exception of fome particular grievances, and fome abufes in detail, which might be remedied, the general idea of giving to indirect taxes more uniformity and fimplicity than they commonly poffefs, can only prefent itfelf to men of little information. They are not fenfible that this fimplicity, by the charms of which they are feduced, would foon be depraved by a multitude of little unforefeen obftacles; which would fpring from the very nature of thefe taxes, or which a fical fpirit would have the ingenuity to introduce. They are not confcious that the cultivation, induftry, and commerce of every province, take a turn from the nature of the contributions which they pay; fo that the increafe of an indirect tax, intended to eftablifh an uniformity between two contiguous provinces, may ruin that which laft experiences it, without its being poffible for an equal diminution in any other tax to reftore it to its juft fituation.

It



It is doubtless necessary that the plan of this reform should be the sole work of the minister, and that all its details should be directed by the same spirit, with the same views, and by an uniform method. But the formation of the register, and the assessment of the tax upon the provinces, cantons, and communities, and even upon individuals, require a minute attention, that can only be executed under the inspection of municipal assemblies; in which each individual, community, and canton, would feel itself interested in being just to others, and might give their proceedings that notoriety, without which no good is to be expected.—This revolution in the form of the taxes would likewise produce a change more or less gradual in cultivation, industry, and commerce; and in consequence of this revolution (the effects of which cannot be accurately foreseen) the proportion of the net produce of different lands would be altered, so as to require successive alterations in the assessments. Thus, even if we suppose that by a kind of miracle a minister and his agents should so far succeed as to execute the first operation, to complete the work the miracle must be repeated.

*N. B. The following is the note referred to in p. 399 of this article, viz.*

A regular analysis of the operation (for converting indirect into direct taxes) may serve to render it better comprehended; and it is inserted with the less scruple, as the common elements only are required for understanding it.



1°. Let  $a', a'', a''' \dots a''''^n$ , express the values respectively of a quantity taken as unity of the actual net produce of each different species of lands.

2°. Let  $b', b'', b''' \dots b''''^n$  express the amounts respectively of the territorial impost put upon these several properties  $a', a'', a''' \dots a''''^n$ .

3°. Let  $I$  express the total mass of impost to be assessed; which is, in other words, the indirect added to the direct impost (of which the latter is represented by  $b', b'', b''' \dots b''''^n$ .)

4°. Let  $I'$  express the direct part of the total mass of impost, which is paid by the properties  $a', a'', a''' \dots a''''^n$ ; and let  $I''$  represent the indirect part paid by the same properties, but in this sense only, that if this part had no existence, the value of these properties would rise. Lastly, let  $i', i'', i''' \dots i''''^n$  express the portions of the latter branch of the general mass of imposts corresponding respectively to  $a', a'', a''' \dots a''''^n$  — We have then  $I = I' + I''$ .

5°. Let  $\int a$  express all the values of  $a$ , its own value being found by multiplying it by the number of the portions of that species of lands, subject to the direct and indirect tax (of which the signs are  $b$  and  $i$ ). And let a similar form of expression be used respectively for the sums of the other several values above-mentioned.

Let us now proceed successively to the consideration of the three methods of changing the indirect into the direct impost, above stated.

*First Hypothesis.* The whole indirect tax is supposed changed into a direct tax by a single stroke.—To understand this, suppose all imposts whatever for a moment suppressed, when the property  $a'$  will become  $a' + b' + i'$ , and a like change will take place in  $a''$ , &c. Now the whole impost being  $I$ , and the new value of all the properties being  $\int a + b + i$ , then

$\frac{I}{\int a + b + i} \times (a' + b' + i')$  will represent what the property  $a'$  ought to pay.

If

If the property  $a'$  is farmed, it is clear that the amount of  $i'$  is precisely what the farmer would give additional, if there was no indirect tax: Therefore upon the suppression of the indirect tax, it is what the farmer ought to pay.—The proprietor of  $a'$ , on the

other hand, will have to pay as follows;  $\frac{I}{\sqrt{a+b+i}}(a' + b' + i) - i'$ ; and also, in addition to this,  $\frac{I}{\sqrt{a+b+i}}(a' + b' + i) - b' - i'$ ,

If the land is let to farmers who are furnished by the landlord with stock, and who divide with him its produce (i. e. to metayers) the part  $i'$  must be divided between the two.—In this and other similar cases, let  $f'$  represent the increased value of the land to the proprietor, by the suppression of the direct impost, and  $g'$  what the farmer would give additional on his side in such case; when we shall have  $i' = f' + g'$ .

In this situation the proprietor ought to pay  $\frac{I}{\sqrt{a+b+i}}(a' + b' + i') - g'$ ; and the farmer ought to pay  $g'$ .

The farmer, it will be perceived, is similarly circumstanced in both cases: if he gains  $i'$  by the suppression of the indirect tax, he pays  $i'$  to the direct one; and if he gains  $g'$ , he pays  $g'$ .—As to the mass of proprietors, their payments in each case are also equal; or, which comes to the same, what they retain for themselves in each case is equal. In effect, they always possessed  $\sqrt{a+b} - I'$ ; and they possess upon the change

$$\sqrt{a+b+i} - \frac{I}{\sqrt{a+b+i}} \times \sqrt{a+b+i} = \sqrt{a+b+i} - I;$$

which may be resolved into the first expression, for since  $\sqrt{i} = I''$  and  $I = I' + I''$ , we have  $\sqrt{a+b+i} - I = \sqrt{a+b} - I'$ .—If the condition of any proprietor should alter, it can only be from his not having formerly paid taxes in a due proportion to his net produce; which would then be a change conformable to justice.

The farmer will be substantially injured, if during the time of his lease, an indirect tax should be laid; as a part of it would rest with himself.—He would also suffer, if the quantities  $i'$ ,  $i''$ , &c. or  $g'$ ,  $g''$  were fixed too high; and this must be well guarded against. But in doing this, the proprietor would necessarily be exposed, during the period of the lease, to have more exacted from him than he ought to pay; which is a fundamental reason for not making the revolution at once, —A farther reason for fixing  $i'$  and  $g'$  very low, and consequently for accomplishing the work by degrees, in order that the loss of the proprietor may be more insensible, is this; all the profits of commerce, the rate of incomes and wages, and the interest of money, naturally lowering more slowly upon the suppression of the indirect impost than equity requires, the proprietor and farmer cannot obtain in the first years all the compensation to which they are entitled.

*Second Hypothesis.* Suppose (which is another mode alluded to) that only a part of the indirect impost I is changed into direct impost, and that this part is proportionally assessed on the net income of the properties already directly taxed: Then putting

$X'$  for the part of the tax requiring reform, that falls upon the proprietors;

$k'$ ,  $k''$ , &c. for the portions of the preceding ( $X'$ ) paid by the properties  $a'$ ,  $a''$ , &c.

$X''$  for the part of the same impost [to be reformed] which is paid by the net produce, in this view, that its existence diminishes so much the net produce;

$b'$ ,  $b''$ , &c. for the parts of  $X''$  corresponding to  $a'$ ,  $a''$ , &c.;

$l'$ ,  $l''$ , &c. for the parts of  $b'$ ,  $b''$ , &c. which may be charged to the landlord; and

$m'$ ,  $m''$ , &c. for the part of the same which may be charged to the farmer;

We shall have the net produces  $a'$ ,  $a''$ , &c. respectively expressed by  $a' + b'$ , and  $a'' + b''$ , &c. Therefore the proprietor



proprietor of  $a'$  ought to pay  $\frac{X}{f a + b} (a' + b') - m'$ ,  
and the farmer of it ought to pay  $m'$ .

This being premised, it is clear that the value of  $a'$  will be brought to  $a' + b' - \frac{X}{f a + b} (a' + b')$ , provided it paid no other indirect tax. But it does pay more indirect impost, namely, the equivalent of  $I' - f b - X'$ : and as it may be supposed proportional to the net produce (for we cannot make any other supposition, the differences in this proportion being arbitrary, and depending upon the manner in which the revenue is employed) we have  $a' = (a' + b' - \frac{X}{f a + b} (a' + b')) \frac{I' - f b - X'}{f a + b - X}$ : which quantity (as will appear) is

not necessarily equal to  $(a' + b' + i') (1 - \frac{I}{f a + b + i})$ ,

which it ought to be; nor yet to  $a' \times \frac{I' - f b}{f a}$ , which

was the amount existing before the change. It might even happen that the new amount should go beyond that of the last expression, and thus the operation for a moment might increase instead of diminish the disproportion.—Nevertheless, it is better even to follow this method, which produces a transient evil, than suffer the indirect impost to subsist.

*Third Hypothesis.* The same denominations being kept as in the second hypothesis, let us only suppose that the properties  $a'$ ,  $a''$ , &c. pay the tax  $x'$ ,  $x''$ , &c. respectively destined to replace the tax  $X' + f l$  from which they are relieved, (which is another of the methods alluded to). We have here  $f x = X' + f l$ .

This premised, the proprietor of  $a'$ , paying  $x'$  and gaining  $l'$ , and being moreover subject to the impost  $I' - X' - f b$ , will find himself (by putting  $- X'$

for  $\overline{f l} - \overline{f x}$  possessed of no more than  $(a' + l' - x')$   
 $(1 - \frac{I' - X' - \overline{f b}}{\overline{f a} - X'})$ . This value is the same as

$(a' + b' + i') (1 - \frac{I}{\overline{f a} + b + i})$ ; whence we ob-

$$\text{tain } x' = a' + l' - (a' + b' + i') \frac{1 - \frac{I}{\overline{f a} + b + i}}{1 - \frac{I' - X' - \overline{f b}}{\overline{f a} - X'}}$$

and the same for every other  $x$ .

There are now three cases in view. 1°. Each  $x$  may be positive; in which case this operation will succeed in re-establishing a due proportion of tax. 2°. They may be partly positive and partly negative; but still by diminishing for each negative  $x$ , an equal proportion of the value of the direct impost  $b$  already levied, the original proportion will here also be re-established. 3°. They may be in part positive and in part negative; and whether the values of  $b$  are insufficient, or not to be changed for other reasons, it becomes necessary to distribute the sum to be paid among the others; but then the sum of the positive  $x$ 's being greater than  $\overline{f l} + X'$ , it is necessary to diminish every  $x$  in the proportion of these two sums.

It is easy to see how in substituting new values, we may repeat the same operation for every successive conversion of indirect into direct imposts.

These formulas will have another use. Suppose, for example, that it is wished to commence the operation, and that the quantities are ascertained to which they shall apply; though only an approximation of the values can be obtained, yet it may be found within what bounds the error shall fall. This being settled, the bounds of the error in the value of each  $x$  may be known; and consequently whether the error is considerable enough to do any sensible harm.—This knowledge

ledge may serve as a guide to the means of distributing the operation into more or fewer partial operations, in order to make the wrong insensible to every one.

Having hitherto supposed the whole indirect impost, when converted, to be assessed upon the land, it is proper to mention that there are restrictions to this rule, (of which we have before spoken.) 1°. In the case of a perpetual annuity due by the state, it is clear that in abolishing the indirect impost, the annuity acquires so much new value. The sum of these and of the landed properties being compared, and the amount found and proportioned that is to be paid by the possessors of the annuities, the calculation for lands should only regard the remainder. Pensions, and other fixed incomes, come within the same rule.—2°. As to rights and privileges (which fall ultimately upon landed properties) each of them make a part of landed property, and when deducted from it (that the value of both may be known) the former must be subjected to the new taxes precisely as the properties themselves, of which they represent certain portions.—3°. If there exist irredeemable annual demands upon individuals, and the total amount of them is unknown, the means of estimating them become more arbitrary: yet there will be little deviation from the truth, in allowing a sum to be retrenched from each, proportioned to

$\frac{X'}{\int a+b+i}$  or  $\frac{I' - \int b}{\int a+b+i}$ . The same thing would happen if it was judged agreeable to justice to subject to the same deduction, during a certain space of time, rents payable at the will of the debtor.

This analytic table appeared proper to remove objections founded on the pretended impossibility of this conversion; other objections having been removed by a number of good works\*.

\* This article, which seems attended with some obscurities, is to be found at p. 156—170 of the original. Its place in the preceding translation is to be seen in Chapter VI.

## ARTICLE



## ARTICLE III.

**D**R. Price having used an expression, in one of his publications, which gave uneasiness to M. Turgot, received the thanks of M. Turgot for retracting it. The expression is referred to in the preceding work, p. 243.—At once to do justice to both of the eminent men concerned, it is proper to present the reader with Dr. Price's comment, when he made public M. Turgot's communication on the subject. It forms a note to it, and is as follows :

‘ What is said here (*i. e.* Dr. Price means  
 ‘ by M. Turgot) refers to the following account of M. Turgot's administration in the  
 ‘ second tract [I published] on *Civil Liberty*  
 ‘ and the War with America,’ p. 150, &c.  
 viz.—“ A new reign produced a new minister of finance in France, whose name  
 “ will be respected by posterity for a set of  
 “ measures as new to the *political* world, as  
 “ any late discoveries in the system of nature  
 “ have been to the philosophical world ;—  
 “ doubtful in their operation, as all untried  
 “ measures must be ; but distinguished by  
 “ their tendency to lay a solid foundation for  
 “ endless peace, industry, and a general enjoyment of the gifts of nature, arts, and  
 “ commerce.

“ commerce. The edicts issued during his  
“ administration exhibit indeed a phenome-  
“ non of the most extraordinary kind: an  
“ absolute king rendering a voluntary ac-  
“ count to his subjects, and inciting his peo-  
“ ple to *think*; a right which it has been the  
“ business of all absolute princes and their  
“ ministers to extinguish.—It is much to be  
“ regretted that the opposition he met with,  
“ and the intrigues of a court, should have  
“ deprived the world of those lights which  
“ must have resulted from the example of  
“ such an administration.”—‘ In this passage  
‘ I had, in the first edition, mentioned im-  
‘ properly M. Turgot’s *want of address* a-  
‘ mong the other causes of his dismissal  
‘ from power. This occasioned a letter from  
‘ him, to inform me of the true reasons of his  
‘ dismissal, and begun that correspondence  
‘ of which this letter is a part, and which  
‘ continued to his death.—It may not be im-  
‘ proper to add here (continues Dr. Price in  
‘ the same note) that his successor was M.  
‘ Necker, author of the interesting treatise on  
‘ the administration of the finances of France,  
‘ just published; and that in the passage just  
‘ quoted the following notice is taken of *his*  
‘ appointment.’ “ After a short interval, a  
“ nomination in some respects still more ex-  
“ traordinary, took place in the court of  
“ France. A court which a few years since  
“ was distinguished by its bigotry and into-  
“ lérance, has raised a *Protestant*, the subject  
“ of

“ of a small but virtuous republic, to a decisive lead in the regulation of its finances.  
“ It is to be presumed, that so singular a preference will produce an equally singular exertion of integrity and talents.”—  
(See Dr. Price’s Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution, and the Means of making it a Benefit to the World ; to which is added, a Letter to M. Turgot, and an Appendix containing a Translation of the Will of M. Fortuné Ricard. p. 107, &c.)

ARTICLE



## ARTICLE IV.

*The following paragraph stood in the original work (see above, p. 304), but was thought most suitable to the Appendix. It belongs to the M. of Condorcet.*

**SUPPOSE** 1° a man dying and leaving posterity ; seek the nearest degree in which he has descendants living ; and then divide his estate into as many equal shares as he had descendants in that degree living, or who have died leaving issue ; the shares of the latter being divisible among their descendants according to the same rule. 2°. If a man die\*, leaving an estate which has come to him by inheritance †, search must be made for one to possess it who in a direct line is the nearest relation and has issue ; if there be a person of such description living, let the estate be his ; if not, let it be distributed as if such party had died actually possessed of it. 3°. If a man leave an estate which he had acquired himself, or personal property, look upwards for his rela-

\* [All the cases here given, except the first, are supposed to relate to persons dying without issue.—Note of the Translator.]

† [A may inherit from his deceased father B ; and his grandfather C, or else the issue of C, or of some other of A's ancestors be living.—Note of the Translator.]

tions

tions in the nearest degree who are alive, or have left issue ; and let it be divided among all the stocks of that degree ; the portions of the descendants of those who are dead being distributed among such descendants, as in the first case. 4°. If a man leaves an estate which has been transmitted to him only collaterally, go back to the former possessor, and then distribute it in the same manner as if it were personal property, of which the former possessor had died actually possessed.—Thus we should have just laws of descent, and at the same time so simple and clear, that the application of them would always be mere matter of combination and calculation \*.

\* The tenor of this last sentence is such, that the translator, for the satisfaction of the reader, thinks it necessary to insert the original note of the author, which is as follows :

Supposons 1°. Un homme laissant de la postérité, on cherchera d'abord à quel degré il a des descendants encore vivans ; on partagera le bien en autant de parts égales qu'il a eu de descendants de ce degré vivans ou ayant laissé postérité, & la part de ceux qui ont laissé postérité sera distribuée de la même manière à leurs descendants. 2°. Un homme laisse un bien dont il a lui même hérité : on cherchera le possesseur en ligne directe le plus prochain qui laisse une descendance ; s'il vit, le bien lui appartiendra ; si non, il sera distribué comme s'il étoit au même moment vacant par sa mort. 3°. Un homme laisse un bien acquis, ou des effets mobilières ; on remontera au degré direct le plus proche dont il reste des personnes vivantes ou des descendants ; on partagera alors également le bien entre toutes les tiges de ce degré, & la portion de ceux qui n'existent plus sera partagée entre leurs descendants comme dans l'article premier. 4°. Un homme laisse-

t-il

t-il un bien qui n'a été transmis qu'en ligne collatérale, on commencera par remonter au premier possesseur, & on le distribuera comme un bien meuble que le possesseur auroit laissé vacant au moment même. Par ce moyen on auroit des loix justes & tellement simples & claires, que l'application ne feroit jamais qu'une opération de combinaisons & de calcul.—Voyez, Vie de M. Turgot, p. 233.

ARTICLE



## ARTICLE V.

THE *advertisement* to the French edition of the preceding work, speaks of another, entitled—"Memoirs of the Life and Works of M. Turgot, Minister of State," which appeared in 1782; whose editor gives the following account of the occasion of their publication.

‘ These *Memoirs* were prepared to serve as materials to the Historical Eulogy of M. Turgot, which M. du Puy pronounced before the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles Lettres. Oratorical forms, and the limits fixed to such discourses, forced this valuable academician to pass over in entire silence a great part of the facts necessary for illustrating it. Many of these being highly interesting, it was thought a duty to preserve what was thus collected and arranged, by committing it to the press.’

The Memoirs in question have great merit; and are attributed chiefly, if not solely, to the Chevalier Du Pont, who is particularly known through Europe, as the respectable editor of the "*Ephemerides du Citoyen*," and who on every account is held in high esteem in France.—It is not to be wondered, that the life and administration of a personage so remarkable as M. Turgot, should excite the attention of

two such considerable persons, as the eminent writers who have undertaken to record them. But, at the same time that the Memoirs deserve every possible attention from all who wish to be acquainted with certain particulars respecting France and M. Turgot; they are less adapted for the English nation, than the work of the Marquis of Condorcet, which contains details of *principles*, rather than of facts.

The following summary of M. Turgot's administration is extracted from the *Memoirs* alluded to, p. 238, &c.

‘ The finances of a great nation were given  
‘ to the charge of one man. He suppressed  
‘ 23 kinds of duties or impositions on neces-  
‘ sary occupations, useful contracts, or me-  
‘ rited compensations. He also abolished  
‘ the corvée for the highways ; saving to the  
‘ nation labour and losses valued at more than  
‘ 40 millions (of livres) by a charge only of  
‘ 10 millions ; and thus procured to the people  
‘ a greater relief than by suppressing one of  
‘ the Vingtiemes. He set aside another kind  
‘ of corvée, which respected the carriage of  
‘ military stores and baggage. He abated  
‘ rigours in the administration of indirect  
‘ impositions, to the great profit of the con-  
‘ tributors, the king, and even of the finan-  
‘ ciers. He softened the mode of collecting  
‘ the territorial impost, by making one indi-  
‘ vidual cease to be answerable for another,  
‘ and as much as possible checking the litigi-  
‘ ousness

ousness of the receivers. He stopped the progress of a terrible plague among cattle. He suppressed a sedition conducted with art. He provided for the equal distribution of subsistence. He gave the utmost encouragement to the commerce and cultivation of the three chief productions of the country; wheat, cattle, and the vine. But he was not for this reason to be held as only occupied in favouring the landed property, (which false philosophers assert, who think its interests opposite to those of the people): He gave to the people a freedom in their exchanges and over their labour, without permitting them to suffer exactions for it. He reformed a multitude of abuses, of which some yielded a profit to his particular post. He abolished, as much as lay in him, the sale of offices. He made a great number of useful establishments. He refused and opposed bad ones. He succoured the poorer servants of the state, by paying their pensions, which were four years in arrear. He paid off capitals, of which the annual charge was too considerable and disproportionate. He supplied the expences of a coronation, of the marriage of a princess, and of the birth of a prince. He repaired one actual bankruptcy; and prevented another. He facilitated payments even as far as India. He settled a part of the colony debts, and put the rest in order. He found the public borrowing at  $5\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. and reduced the rate



‘ rate to 4. He burthened the treasury with  
‘ an anticipation of only 10 millions of livres;  
‘ while he paid off 24 millions of debt due,  
‘ 50 of that funded, and 28 of monies anti-  
‘ cipated; leaving the public engagements  
‘ lessened 84 millions. He found the reve-  
‘ nue 19 millions deficient, and he left a  
‘ surplus of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  millions. He did this in  
‘ twenty months, during thirteen of which  
‘ only he was capable of business. His ad-  
‘ ministration prepared the means by which  
‘ three years war expences were supported.  
‘ His genius served the state long after his  
‘ retreat.—This is but a part of what he did  
‘ for France, who was yet unmindful of him;  
‘ and it is little compared with what he *would*  
‘ have done.’

F I N I S.



## ERRATA & ADDENDA.

**ERRATA.**—p. 8. l. 9. for “*probable*,” read “*encouraging*.”—p. 9. l. 3. for *it would be necessary*, read *he should be called upon*.—p. 36. l. 10. read *subject*.—p. 38. l. 19. for *procure*, read *produce*.—p. 44. l. 21. leave out, *and that*.—p. 52. l. 17. for *is*, read *was*.—p. 84. l. 8. after *anxiety*, insert *with*.—p. 91. l. 5. read *ferment*.—p. 146. l. 20. for *compounded for*, read *leased*.—p. 205. l. 1. for “*unpliant*,” read “*little pliant*.”—p. 249. Note, last line but one, for *with great simplicity*, read *very naturally*.—p. 272. l. 14. before *the*, insert *to*.—p. 314. l. 11. transpose, and place *as*, after *in the social state*.—p. 315. l. 12. after *to*, insert *exercise*.—p. 399. Note, after the reference (\*), insert *A*.

**LESS IMPORTANT ERRATA.**—p. 3. l. 13. leave out “*in his life*.”—p. 27. l. 14. for *on*, read *by*.—p. 31. l. 17. read *analysis*.—p. 40. l. 4. insert *to*, after *afforded*.—p. 46. l. 22. for *of*, read *by*.—p. 90. l. 1. for *those*, read *these*.—p. 106. l. 2. read *article*.—p. 209. last line, for *experience*, read *meet with*.—p. 240. l. 3. for *bad*, read *it has*.—p. 262. for line 2, read *committed the verses of the original to memory*.—p. 282. l. 9. put *f* at the beginning of it. —p. 287. l. 14. for *in*, read *by*.—p. 316. l. 6. for *the*, read *a*.—p. 362. l. 8. for *would*, read *should*.—p. 416. l. 5. after 1782, insert *or 1783*.

N. B. The sterling amounts affixed to the sums given in French livres must be corrected by the following rule, extracted from p. 150 of Dr. Price’s work, quoted in the Appendix; viz. “Strike off from the number of livres the two figures on the right hand, and multiply by 4 the remaining figures. The product, increased by a *tenth* of itself, will give nearly the number of pounds answering to the number of livres.”—Thus 100,000 livres

$$\begin{array}{r}
 4 \\
 \hline
 4,000 \\
 400 \\
 \hline
 \pounds. 4,400 \text{ sterling.}
 \end{array}$$

**ADDENDA.**—p. 68. l. 11. after *addressed*, insert a mark of reference for the following note. *The Abbé Terray*.

P. 262. l. 13. after *English bishop*, insert the like, for the following note. *Supposed to allude to a noble English person, now an Irish bishop*.

P. 418. l. 30. after *India*, insert the like, for the following note. *Supposed to allude to bills drawn by the famous M. le Poivre, many years preceding*.





